CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

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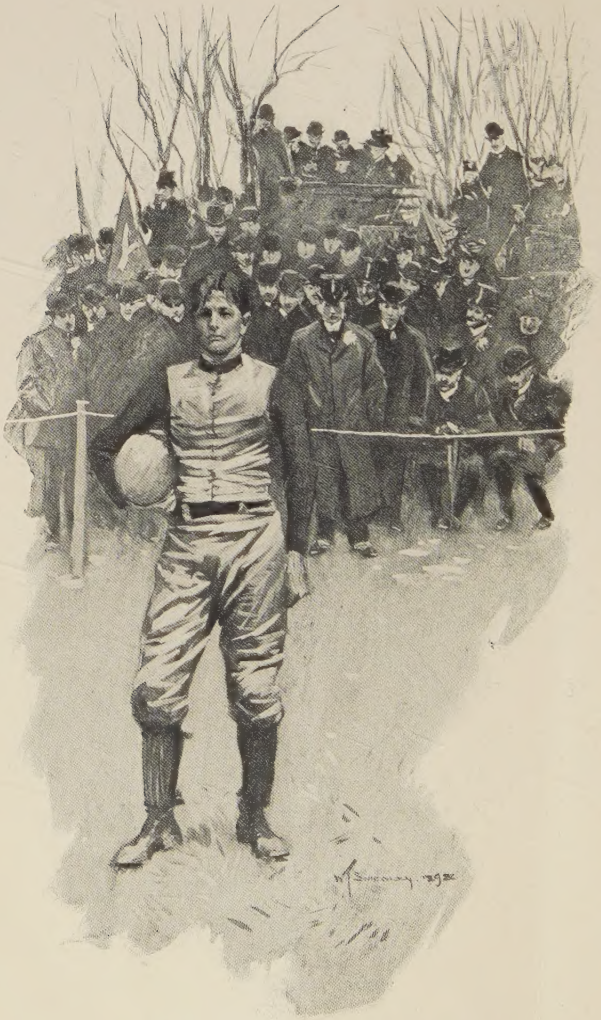
Merry Xmas to
Willie from
Josie
Xmas. 12/25/1910.



CAPTAIN OF THE ELEVEN

CAPTAIN OF The Eleven

BY
ALDEN ARTHUR KNIPE

ILLUSTRATED

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMX

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Published September, 1910.
Printed in the United States of America

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I

THE KICK-OFF

"TIME out!"

The referee's whistle sounded shrilly through the crisp November air, and the game came to a temporary halt on the Military Academy's ten-yard line.

In the grandstand there was a stretching of necks and then a murmur of disappointment among the Clinton enthusiasts as they watched Billy Bryan, the trainer, hurry out on the field.

"Who is it?" the crowd asked, and it seemed a long time before the answer came.

"Cliff Rogers hurt his ankle!" shouted some one from the side-lines. Rogers was the Clinton captain.

Hargrave, their coach, paced up and down glancing anxiously at the group of subs, and now and then shaking his head. Hargrave was worried. If anything happened to put Rogers out of the game there was no one to fill his place, and Clinton's chances to win would vanish.

Out on the field Cliff Rogers was sitting on the ground gritting his teeth and trying desperately not to show the pain he was suffering. About him were gathered his team-mates, watching intently while Billy Bryan, after cutting the laces, drew off the boy's shoe and exposed a rapidly swelling ankle.

"How is it?" Cliff asked, a trifle tremulously.

The trainer arose, and motioned to Hargrave. "You'll have to come out," he said, shortly.

"Oh, but, Billy, I can't!" cried the boy. "Why, it's only just sprained, and—and it 'll be all right in a minute."

Cliff made an effort to rise, but the trainer spoke peremptorily. "Now you lie still. There won't be any walking on that ankle for ten days anyway, and it all comes of your not keeping your legs stiff when you fall. How many times have I told you that?"

"But, Billy, I just can't stop," Cliff pleaded, the tears coming to his eyes. "Why, there's no one to take my place, and—and we were just going to score, and—Billy, you must let me play!"

By this time the coach was on the field, and Cliff turned to him.

"Please, Mr. Hargrave," he begged, "don't let Billy take me out. I'll be all right in a minute."

Hargrave looked down at the injured ankle with a sober face. It was obvious to any one that the boy could not walk, much less run.

"I'm afraid there's nothing else to do but take you

out, Cliff," he said. "It's mighty hard luck, old man, but—"

"Who will you put in my place?" Cliff interrupted. "There isn't anybody—and, oh, Mr. Hargrave, I can't go out! It's my last game for the school, and I'm captain, and—" He was forced to stop to keep from breaking down completely.

"It's mighty hard luck," one of the Academy boys remarked, sympathetically.

Big Tom Cary, who played centre for Clinton, leaned down and patted his captain on the back. "Don't you worry, Cliff, old man, we'll beat 'em, anyway. See if we don't!"

"Sure we will!" echoed the other members of the team.

"But who will we put in?" asked Cliff, looking up at Hargrave despairingly. "There isn't any one but Harry Carstairs who can play my position, and he's at quarter."

"All we can do," began Hargrave, after a moment's pause, "is to put Harry at half, and—"

"Then who will play quarter?" the Clinton team demanded in chorus.

"Bunny Reeves," said Hargrave, quietly.

"Bunny Reeves!" cried Cliff. "Why he's only a kid, and not much bigger than a minute."

"It's the best we can do," Hargrave returned. "He isn't very big, I admit, but under the circumstances he'll have to go in—and perhaps he'll surprise you. I hope so, anyway. Come along, Cliff."

Hargrave and Billy led the limping captain off the field, a heartbroken, woebegone boy, who was so unhappy that even the cheers from his school-mates in the grandstand failed to ease his disappointment.

Probably no one was more surprised than little Bunny Reeves himself when Hargrave nodded to him.

"Do you mean *me*, sir?" he asked, in a bewildered sort of way.

"Yes; hurry up and get that sweater off!" was the answer; and the boy, with trembling fingers, made himself ready.

"Now, see here, Bunny," Hargrave said, leaning down and putting a hand on the boy's shoulder, "don't get rattled. You're all right, and I want you to play just as you have been doing on the scrubs, without thinking it is a real game. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Bunny.

"It's our ball on their ten-yard line, and if we can score now I think we will win, even though Cliff *is* out of the game. There isn't much time left, you know. You go in at quarter, and on the first play I want you to take the ball yourself and run to the right. If you don't make it, take the ball again—unless, of course, you lose ground, in which case let Carstairs try a drop-kick." They were walking out on the field as Hargrave talked, and he whispered his final instructions. "I'm counting on your being so small they won't see you, and," he added,

"if you have anything of your father in you, you'll make good." Then he hurried back to the sidelines.

In the grandstand there was considerable discussion. Why were they putting in a kid like Bunny Reeves? He didn't stand a show with those big fellows from the Academy. He had nerve enough, maybe, but—he was such a kid! Well, it was all up with Clinton now; no doubt of that. The only hope was that the Academy wouldn't score and the game would end in a tie. It had been the worst kind of luck that Cliff Rogers should have been hurt just then, because Clinton was sure to have made a touchdown, and now—well, all they could do was to hope for the best; still, it was like playing with only ten men, because, really, Bunny Reeves didn't count.

Out on the field the Clinton boys were trying hard not to be despondent, and when Bunny came on they clustered about him, patting him on the back, just to show they had all the confidence in the world in him.

Meanwhile the Academy boys were secretly elated at what had occurred. Not that they rejoiced that Rogers had been hurt, for they were a decent lot of fellows all round; but it was natural that they should be glad that the best player on the Clinton eleven had been forced to leave the game, making them fairly certain of winning. They looked at Bunny and laughed (they couldn't help it, he was so

small), and jumped to their places in the line ready to take the ball at once.

The referee blew his whistle again, and the game was on.

But Bunny was rattled in spite of Hargrave's encouragement. When the teams lined up and he went to his position at quarter-back, he couldn't for the life of him remember the signal for the play Hargrave had spoken of. In fact, he couldn't remember anything, and for what seemed a long time he stood rubbing his red head, trying to think of those numbers that a few moments before were as familiar as his own name.

Then, all of a sudden, they came to him, and, turning toward the backs, he called out the signal in his high, boyish voice.

"He'll do," said Hargrave to himself. "He's got the nerve, but he certainly is pretty small."

Bunny called the numbers once more to be sure every one understood, and then reached down for the ball.

The instant it was passed there was a crowding together of both teams, a mass at the centre, with one or two men of the Clinton eleven running hard to the right end of the line, and the usual confused struggle that for an instant is a part of every play on the football field.

Then suddenly Bunny Reeves came flying out from the scrimmage clutching the ball, which seemed almost as large as he, and making his short legs

move as fast as he could. He was running straight across the field, and for an instant none of his opponents seemed to see him at all, but, before he could turn toward the goal-line, two of the Academy players spied him and made after him like a shot. As they came near Bunny slowed up and dodged back, halting almost in his tracks, and every one thought he would be downed for certain; but the Academy full-back, not being able to change his direction so quickly, overran his man, and succeeded only in brushing the youngster with one arm. It staggered Bunny momentarily, but he recovered and was off again, this time straight toward the goal. His delay, however, had given some of the other Academy boys time to come up to him, and he seemed surrounded. Apparently there was nothing Bunny could do, and no way for him to get out of the circle of antagonists who hedged him in; but he was very small, and first one and then another of the men tried to tackle him and failed, for, when he crouched down, he was so near the ground that it was almost impossible for the taller boys to hold him, though one of them bumped him pretty hard and Bunny lost his feet. But even then he didn't stop. He rolled over once, twice, and then, scrambling up again, tumbled over the line for a touchdown.

In the grandstand the Clinton supporters went wild with delight, and the way they shouted showed how little they had expected what had happened.

The Academy were silent for a minute, but then they gave their team a good, rousing cheer for encouragement, and just to show they hadn't a thought of defeat.

On the side-lines Hargrave whispered to Billy, "That's what I hoped would happen," and Billy nodded approvingly, though he didn't even smile. Billy rarely did smile, by-the-way, and those who didn't know him had an idea he was cross.

Of course, Clinton thought the game was over. There was so little time left to play that no one, not even the Academy boys in the grandstand, expected their team to score, and Hargrave himself began to feel comfortable about it; but there was plenty of pluck in the Academy eleven, and, when they lined up to kick, their captain told his men that they must even things up, at any rate.

Clinton ran the ball back a few yards, and then promptly lost it on a fumble. Just whose fault it was no one seemed to know, but lose it they did, and Academy had a first down on Clinton's forty-five-yard line. Then they began to work it slowly but surely down the field, while the Clinton supporters grew anxious, and Hargrave paced restlessly along the side-lines. On the Academy went, getting nearer and nearer to that precious goal, until presently they were on Clinton's ten-yard line.

"They have three minutes yet," Billy Bryan said to Hargrave, and the latter nodded his head rather dolefully.

Undoubtedly Bunny Reeves was the weak point on the defence. He was too small, and try as he would to stop the rushes of his bigger opponents, they went over him again and again for substantial gains.

It was big Tom Cary at centre who thought of a way to stop them, and he called Carstairs and Bunny to him for a consultation.

On the next play Bunny crouched down behind the centre, with Carstairs beside him, and as the Academy man snapped the ball he jumped straight over Cary as if he were playing leap-frog. Carstairs gave him a vigorous push while he was in the air, and before the opposite quarter could get the ball away he was on top of him. A fumble followed, and when the officials reached the bottom of the pile there was Tom hugging the ball desperately.

A moment later the referee blew his whistle, and the game was over.

After the two teams had cheered each other there was a rush for the field, and soon Bunny Reeves was being carried on the shoulders of his fellow-students amid the shouts of the entire school.

Bunny didn't like it very much, and tried to get down more than once, but they held him up until they reached the gymnasium, where he was glad enough to escape to the dressing-room.

There was a great deal of excitement that night about the school. There was a dinner for the team, at which Doctor MacHenry, the head-master, made

a speech and congratulated the boys on their play, and Mr. Hargrave told them they had really done well, considering everything. Cliff Rogers, standing at the head of the table with a crutch under his arm, said that, even though he was forced to go out of the game, he was just as proud as if he had made the touchdown himself, because it was his substitute who had done it, so that he felt that he might take some of the credit of it to himself.

In fact, every one had a word to say about little Bunny Reeves, who sat silently at the table, not knowing how to act, for, after all, he was only a boy in the lower forms, and not quite at home with these big fellows, many of whom were going to college next year.

When it was all over, Bunny ran to his study in Barton Hall, so that he could have a few minutes with his chum, Bob Struthers, before the lights were out. Bob was waiting for him, and the two talked until Mr. Graves, the house-master, knocked at the door and told them that it was long past their bedtime, but, considering everything, he wouldn't scold.

So they went to bed, and the only lights left in the big hall were those in Mr. Graves's study on the first floor.

And that is how Bunny Reeves began his football career.

II

AN APPEAL TO THE REFEREE

THREE years later, at the end of the season, Bunny Reeves was made captain of the football team, and it is with the following summer and autumn that this story has to do.

Bunny had been at Clinton since he was able to talk—almost. On the books of the school he was entered as Percival Haughton Reeves, but every one had called him Bunny as far back as he could remember, except, of course, Doctor MacHenry, the head-master, who usually addressed him as "My boy," except when he meant to be a little stern and said "Percival."

He had grown into a rather chunky, thick-set boy weighing perhaps a hundred and fifty-five in his football suit, and, being fast, he made a valuable man behind the line. His face was freckled, and he had red hair—at least, his hair was more red than any other color, though not bright enough to give him a name like "Reddy" or "Bricktop."

Bunny didn't talk much. He was inclined to sit silent while the others chatted of this or that, so that he had the name of being a "queer little chap"

from the very first, though he was always willing to do anything the other boys did.

The fact is that Bunny missed what other boys had, and that was a home. His mother died very soon after he was born, and his father was so broken-hearted over it that he plunged into his business, hoping to forget his sorrow a little. He left the baby to old Susan, the colored nurse, and, by the time the boy was old enough to go to Clinton, Mr. Reeves was so absorbed in other things that he put off getting acquainted with his son, saying to himself that "there were many years ahead for that." Thus it happened that Bunny scarcely ever saw his father, for in the summer (until he was old enough to travel alone) Susan came for him and took him to a camp in the Adirondacks, where he stayed until school opened again. But although the old nurse did all she could for "her boy," as she called him, she couldn't give him what he had lost.

It was this, perhaps, that made Bunny a little different from his schoolmates. He used to puzzle a good deal over it, and, after vacations especially, he would sit and listen to the fellows talking of what went on at home, and regretting that their parents would not let them do the things they wanted to, until Bunny began to feel that they scarcely appreciated how lucky they were to have some one interested in them, for he knew he would have given anything to have his father take a hand in his goings and comings. It was always a question of rules

with Bunny. He couldn't go out of bounds, not because his father objected, but because "it was against the rule," and that made all the difference in the world.

Bunny was a fair student. He didn't like to study any better than other boys, and he was neither more nor less mischievous than most. Occasionally he found himself in trouble with Doctor MacHenry, was disciplined by the other masters when he deserved it, and escaped many a punishment that he should have had—just like other boys.

In athletics, and particularly football, he excelled, and from the time he took Cliff Rogers's place on the school eleven he remained a regular member of the squad until he was elected captain. It may be that his associates had an idea that Bunny was different because he was so silent, still, for all that, he was very popular, though no one thought much of what was likely to become of him.

It is a mistake to say "no one," for there was Doctor MacHenry—"Old Mac," the boys called him behind his back. He knew Bunny's father well; in fact, Mr. Reeves had been one of his boys years before, and the good doctor worried a great deal about Bunny. It was he that put Bob Struthers and Bunny together into the big room in Barton Hall, for Bob was just the opposite of Bunny, and talked all the time, so that from the first the two got along famously, and the friendship, begun when the boys were small, grew and strengthened as

the years passed until now they were quite inseparable.

One day, a week or two before the summer vacation, Bob Struthers received a letter from his mother that had important news in it for Bunny.

"Mother won't let me go," Bob said, rather disconsolately, to his room-mate, who was busy with a book.

"To the camp?" asked Bunny, looking up.

"Yes," Bob went on; "she says I'm not to tease her any more about it—that she sees me little enough as it is. I think it's pretty hard luck, don't you?"

"Oh, I don't know," Bunny answered, vaguely. "There isn't much to do at camp."

There was a pause as Bob went on reading. Presently he burst out into an exclamation of delight:

"Listen, Bunny! Mother says I'm to bring you home with me this summer. That there is plenty of room in the cottage, because sister is going to Newport, and you can stay as long as you like. Of course, you'll come. You haven't anybody to ask whether you may or not."

For some minutes Bunny was silent. He wanted to go, no doubt of that; but this was a new situation, and he wasn't sure whether it was against the rules or not.

"I don't know," he said, finally. "I'll have to think about it."

"But you want to come, don't you?" Bob insisted.

"You've never been to the seashore, and it's really lots of fun. You see, there's the bay and the ocean, and we can fish and sail and bathe and—oh, lots of things! Please, Bunny, say you'll come, so I can write mother right away."

"I can't tell yet," answered Bunny, a trifle doggedly.

"Oh, now you're going to get one of your silent fits," Bob retorted. "I don't see why you can't come. Having you there would be almost as much fun as going to camp."

"I'll think about it," Bunny repeated, and that was all Bob could get out of him for the time being.

Bunny spent all that day puzzling over it, and when the evening came he was no nearer a solution than before. He didn't know exactly what to do. He wanted to visit the Struthers' very much indeed. He was tired of the camp, and had been hoping that Bob might be permitted to go with him this summer, just to make it more lively, because most of the boys who went there were too young to be companionable. But it had never before occurred to him to question his own going. Now that this invitation had come from Mrs. Struthers to spend the summer at the seashore, he wondered what he should do.

There was Susan who might be consulted, but he was sure she would have no authority. It was the rule that he should go to the camp in summer, just as it was the rule that he should go to Clinton in the winter. These things had always been so

from the time he could remember, and when it came to breaking the routine he didn't know what to do about it. It would seem simple enough to most boys. They would sit down and write, saying: "Dear Dad,—I want to spend the summer with Bob Struthers. His mother says I may, and won't you let me?" That would be the easiest way to do it; but heretofore Bunny's letters to his father had been rather formal, and he hesitated about making this request, which seemed to him out of the ordinary, and he was inclined to exaggerate its importance.

Finally he decided that in a case like this he had better consult Doctor MacHenry, and went directly after supper one evening.

"I wanted to ask you something," he began, uncertainly.

The old doctor smiled encouragingly. "Go ahead, my boy," he said.

"Well, you see, sir, Bob Struthers's mother has invited me to go to the seashore with him this summer, and he wants to know whether I can go or not—you see, sir, I don't know."

The doctor looked grave. He guessed what was going on in Bunny's mind, and knew the undercurrent of unhappiness in the boy's life.

"I suppose you'd like to go?" he asked, after a moment's pause.

"Yes, sir, I should," he answered.

"And you want permission—is that it?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bunny. "Of course, I thought of writing to father, but—but he's so busy, and—" The boy halted.

"You didn't want to bother him?" The doctor supplied the word.

"That's it, sir," Bunny agreed.

"Well, my boy," said Doctor MacHenry, after another short silence, "I don't believe he'd be bothered. Just write him a little letter saying you'd like to go if he has no objection."

"Very well, sir," said Bunny, rising to leave the room.

"And, my boy," the doctor added, "you might mention that you are the captain of the football team."

Bunny halted on his way toward the door. "Do you think he'd care about that?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the doctor—"yes, I believe he would. In fact, I'm sure he would."

"Thank you, sir," said Bunny, as he went off to his room and wrote the following letter:

"Dear Father,—Mrs. Struthers is the mother of my best friend, Bob, and she has asked me to go to their cottage at the seashore this summer instead of the camp. May I go? I should like to very much. I hope this does not bother you. I am the captain of the football team.

"Your son, P. H. Reeves."

After the letter was off, Bunny told Bob, and the

two boys waited vainly for a week, looking for an answer in each mail, and being disappointed three times a day regularly.

"I guess I can't go," said Bunny; and added to himself, "I must have bothered him, after all."

"But maybe it will come to-morrow." Bob didn't give up so easily as did Bunny.

"Maybe," Bunny answered, but he really didn't think so.

Almost another week went by and both boys had given up hope, when one day a short note came from his father:

"My dear Son,—I have just returned from an extended trip in the West, and find your letter waiting for me. I am sending by this same mail a request to Doctor MacHenry that he decide the question of your going to the seashore with your friend Bob Struthers. I am sorry there should have been this delay in answering you, but I am such a busy man that I am forced to neglect many personal matters in which I am deeply interested.

"Affectionately, your father,

"D. H. Reeves."

Bunny went at once to see Doctor MacHenry.

"Yes, I have heard from your father," said the old master, in answer to the boy's eager question. "I shall write to Mrs. Struthers, and, if she is still willing, I believe it will be good for you to go."

"Thank you, sir," returned Bunny; and then, with some hesitation: "I wish father wasn't so busy."

"You mustn't think," the doctor hastened to reply, "that just because he is so full of his business affairs that he isn't interested in your welfare too. He sent a large check for your expenses, and said he expected you would want a sail-boat. That was thoughtful of him, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was," answered Bunny, slowly. "I've always had everything—a good deal more than other boys, except—" He paused a moment, and then continued, wistfully: "I never see him, you know, sir, and sometimes it almost seems as if he didn't care. He's so busy, I suppose."

"Yes, that's it," the doctor agreed. "Fathers have to earn the money for the boys, and that takes time, you know." And then he talked to Bunny, and did his best to make light of the matter; but the boy, always silent on this particular subject, had little further to say, and the good doctor worried about him more than any one realized.

"By-the-way," he asked, as Bunny was going out, "did you say anything to your father about football?"

"Yes, sir," answered Bunny; "I told him I was captain."

Doctor MacHenry sat thinking a long time after his visitor had left him. Finally he shook his head sadly. "Too bad—too bad," he murmured, under his breath. "I had hoped the football might make him realize that the boy wasn't a baby any more."

III

DOWN!

THE summer was a glorious one for Bunny, though in some ways it made him more thoughtful and silent than ever. Evidently Doctor MacHenry had written to Mrs. Struthers, telling her some of the facts of the boy's life: how his mother had died long ago and how busy his father was, and Mrs. Struthers had understood; for she opened her heart to Bunny, making him love her in the way that most mothers know how to do.

And in spite of occasional heartaches, Bunny had never had so good a time; for Blue Point, where the Struthers have their cottage, is a fine place to spend a summer. There is the ocean on one side and the bay on the other, so that, as Bob said, one can "fish and sail and bathe and—oh, lots of things!"

Bunny rented the *Beth*, a little eighteen-foot catboat which just matched Bob's *Dart*, and although he didn't need it, because the boys usually sailed together, Bunny found it more fun to have a boat of his own, especially when they played water-tag. Bunny had learned to sail a boat in the camp, but he was glad to find that canoes were very popular

on the upper bay where Blue Point is situated, and sent at once to the Adirondacks for his. Bob had a canoe also, and was the best paddler in his class, having won the annual race the year before.

Altogether there were so many things for the boys to do that Bunny had little time to worry himself about matters he saw no way of helping. And then, too, Ted Halliday's coming made a difference.

One afternoon, quite early in the season, Bob and Bunny were sailing in the lower bay. The wind had been freshening, so that when they decided to turn back they found that a full mainsail was more than the *Dart* could carry comfortably, running free, and they dropped their peak, easing her up at the head, and started home.

After you go through the draw and get into the upper bay, the channels are rather tortuous, unless you make your course through the Gunning Ditch, which is a little risky, because you have a sharp turn to clear Masthead Point, and there isn't much room to go about. In trying to squeeze around with a following wind you are apt to jibe and fetch up on the point, which is a lee shore under the circumstances—and then, of course, you have plenty of trouble. It's always a rather delicate matter in a strong south wind, and it isn't a bad plan, if you can get way enough, to drop your sail and drift around that point. But this, of course, no self-respecting boy would do, and consequently there were numerous occasions when a mainsail jibed and

a lot of good paint was scraped off the bow and sides of some stanch craft.

On this day Bunny was sailing, Bob tending sheet, and they decided it was quicker and more exciting to take the Gunning Ditch course than the longer and safer one to the west, where the river empties into the bay. They had noticed a little vessel ahead of them about the size of the one they were in, and Bob, who prided himself upon knowing all the boats in the upper bay, was puzzled.

"I can't make her out," he admitted finally.

"She's a nice-looking cat, anyway," said Bunny. "She's going through the Gunning Ditch, too. Say, Bob, you'd better take the tiller through here—I don't know the course well enough."

The exchange was made, and the boys sat silently watching the sail ahead of them.

"He doesn't seem very sure of what he's doing," Bunny said, after a few moments.

"She'd handle better with her peak dropped like ours," Bob answered. And again they lapsed into silence.

There seemed to be only one person in the other boat. He was standing looking over the side, and as the boys in the *Dart* waited eagerly to see him make the turn they noticed the other craft swing to the north, and an instant later the mainsail jibe.

"Gee!" said Bobby, who had done that very thing more than once. "Did you see that boom come over? She'll be on a lee shore in a

minute." And even as he spoke the prediction came true.

Now, however, the watching boys expected the thrashing sail to be lowered as speedily as possible, and some one to appear in the bow with a pole to begin the task of shoving the boat out of her difficult position; but nothing of the sort happened. There she lay, with the sail flapping.

"What's the matter with the fellow?" said Bunny. "His sail will be all ripped to pieces."

"Maybe the halliards are jammed," Bob suggested.

"But we could see him working at them," replied Bunny.

"Maybe he's been knocked overboard," Bob said, a little anxiously. "I've known it to happen on a jibe like that, when you didn't expect it."

"Come on! Hurry up!" exclaimed Bunny.

"We're hurrying as fast as we can, unless you want to raise our peak, and even then I'm not sure we'd make any better time."

Bunny had gone to the bow, and was looking toward the stranded craft ahead.

"Come back in the boat," said Bob, who was sailing. "We'll have to make this turn pretty quick, and I don't trust this wind. We're getting a puff from the westward every now and then, and if it swings 'round any more we'll have to come about before we make the turn. Anyway, I don't want you in the water."

Bunny, realizing the wisdom of this remark, came back into the boat. They made the first turn safely, and were now within a hundred yards of the stranded craft. Still there was no sign of life aboard her, and both boys were becoming more than anxious.

"Certainly something has happened to that fellow. I wish we could go faster," Bunny grumbled.

"I only hope he isn't overboard. He might be drowned," said Bob. "I never saw any one that was drowned. Did you, Bunny?"

"No!" snapped Bunny, sharply, "and I don't want to! I wish your old boat would hurry. If I had a canoe I would be there by this time."

As they approached, it became almost certain that something serious had happened. The trim little cat-boat tossed this way and that with her full mainsail flapping, the peak rising and falling with loud reports, her stern drifting first in one direction and then in another, while her bow, held fast, made it look alarming, for she seemed alive and very helpless.

As the boys came nearer they grew more and more anxious, and Bob's face was pale. Bunny, still impatient, stood up, much to his companion's discomfiture, who wanted the *Dart* kept as steady as possible while they were sailing so close to a jibe. Finally, they were at the turn.

"Hadn't we better drop our sail?" asked Bobby, who was now leaving everything to Bunny.

"Not yet," answered Bunny, positively.

"What are you going to do?" demanded Bob, a little panic-stricken.

But Bunny didn't reply. He stepped back and took the tiller out of Bob's hands, and, putting his weight against it, headed for the other boat. Then, when he was almost upon it, he threw the *Dart* up into the wind as quickly as he could.

"Now drop the sail!" he shouted to Bob, who did as he was commanded, and the gaff came rattling down. Almost at the same moment the two little vessels drifted together, and Bunny, leaping aboard the stranger, pulled at the sail that hid the cockpit.

Bob looked over from the stern of the *Dart*, and saw a motionless figure of a boy about their own age stretched flat on his back. There was blood on the white face.

"Oh, Bunny!" exclaimed Bob, in an awed voice. "It's Ted Halliday, of the Academy, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Bunny, "and he looks as if he was dead!"

IV

COACHING

HAPPILY the boy in the boat was not dead, which fact was quite apparent to Bunny the moment he leaned down, for he could both see and hear that he breathed.

"We must get him to Blue Point as fast as we can," said Bunny, anxiously, and together they dragged the unconscious figure aboard the *Dart*. This done, Bunny took off his coat to make a pillow, and, dipping his handkerchief in the water, wiped away the blood which came from a cut on Ted's head.

While Bunny was busy making the injured boy as comfortable as he could, Bob was looking after the strange boat, lowering the sail and throwing out the anchor, so that she could not drift away. Then coming back to the *Dart*, he poled her off the lee shore, and, hoisting the sail, headed his little vessel homeward.

"We must get him to a doctor as fast as we can," Bunny remarked, after a moment or two of silence.

"We might find Doctor Wilson at the dock," Bob said, hopefully. "He's a cross old chap, and

says he won't bother with sick people in the summer; but he might tell us what to do; he's always hanging around there."

"The thing I can't make out is what Ted Halliday is doing here," said Bunny, thoughtfully.

"It's funny that we should be the ones to find him, isn't it?" answered Bob, and he was right. It was funny, because Ted Halliday represented Clinton's chief rival in athletics. He was to the Military Academy what Bunny was to Clinton, their best all-round athlete and the captain of the football team. He and Bunny had played against each other for several years in the past; except during the contests they had not met, but there was hardly a boy at Clinton who didn't know Halliday by sight.

"Do you suppose he's hurt much?" asked Bob, who was sailing.

"I don't know," said Bunny; "but it looks to me as if he was. I wish he'd open his eyes." And as if in answer to Bunny's plea the injured boy raised his eyelids.

He looked about him in a dazed sort of way, wrinkled up his brows as he saw Bunny, and then asked, in a faint voice, "What down is it?"

The boys saw immediately of what the other was thinking. It didn't strike them as being amusing, but rather the reverse. Neither of them said anything for a moment—there didn't seem to be anything to say; and Ted, after another puzzled look at Bunny, shut his eyes again as if he were very tired.

Presently he opened them once more, and this time seemed to understand better what was going on.

"How did I get here?" he asked, weakly; and then, without waiting for an answer, went on, "Oh yes, I remember, the boom struck me on the head." He looked around him again with an anxious expression on his face, and started to get up. "Why, this isn't my boat!" he exclaimed.

"I don't think I'd get up if I were you," said Bunny, putting a restraining hand on his shoulder. "Better wait till we see a doctor."

"Yes, lie still," cautioned Bob. "We'll be there pretty soon now."

"But where is my boat?" demanded Ted, in a stronger voice. "This isn't the *Arrow*. She was brand-new!"

He was plainly worried, and, although Bunny told him that his boat was quite safe and couldn't get away, that didn't satisfy Ted. He wanted them to put back at once, insisting that he was all right; but this the other boys wisely refused to do.

"We'll get the *Arrow* as soon as you're landed," Bunny promised, and Ted was forced to be satisfied with this assurance.

By the time they reached the dock Ted was certainly better, and they were lucky enough to find Doctor Wilson there, as Bob had predicted. He didn't seem at all cross, however, for he came at once when he was told about it, and felt Ted's pulse and looked at his eyes. Then he said the boy should

be sent home in a carriage, and that he wasn't to walk at all. In fact, he was just as nice as he could be for a "cross doctor," and guaranteed to take charge of Ted while the boys went back for the *Arrow*, which Ted insisted should be done at once or he would go himself.

Ted explained that he and his mother were staying at the hotel, and that he had been sailing his boat up from Toms River, where she had been built, when the accident happened.

"I thought I knew that channel up the Gunning Ditch," he said, apologetically; "but it doesn't look as if I did, does it?"

Both boys hastened to assure him that it wasn't any disgrace to go ashore there, as 'most everybody did it once or twice during the season; and then, leaving him in the care of Doctor Wilson, Bob and Bunny returned to Masthead Point for the *Arrow*. They reached home about dusk, and hastened to the hotel to satisfy Ted of her safety. They found him in bed, rather pale, but otherwise not much the worse for the accident. The doctor had ordered him to stay quiet for a day or two, after which time he would be quite well again.

"There's some paint off her bow," Bunny said, in answer to Ted's anxious inquiries about the *Arrow*. "But her seams are all right, for there isn't a drop of water in her. She's a fine little boat," he added.

"Isn't she!" Ted returned, enthusiastically. "But,

say, it was funny *you* fellows should have found me."

"It certainly was," agreed Bob.

"And do you know what you said when you first opened your eyes?" Bunny asked.

"No, I don't," said Ted.

"Well, you wanted to know what down it was, just as if we were playing a game."

"I guess seeing you made me think of that," Ted returned.

"You were down all right!" said Bob. And so they talked until Mrs. Halliday suggested that they had better let Ted sleep, and they left, promising to visit him next day.

"I say, Bunny," Bob began, as soon as they were outside, "he seems like a nice chap, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does," replied Bunny.

"It's funny he should be," Bob went on, "after all the things they say about him at school. I never thought I'd like a fellow that went to the Military Academy."

"Oh, well," Bunny returned, "I guess the fellows at the Academy are just like any other fellows. Probably they say all sorts of things about us over there. Anyway, Ted Halliday doesn't seem like the mucker they say he is, and I like him."

"So do I," agreed Bob, and as it turned out that Ted liked Bob and Bunny, the three boys were inseparable for the rest of the summer—and for many years afterward, as perhaps you'll learn some day.

"He's so square!" was the way Bunny expressed his approval, and the result of this intimacy was that the boys acquired a very much more correct idea of their school rivals. Somehow, before this, Bob and Bunny had always supposed that nothing good ever came out of the Military Academy, that the fellows over there were more or less unscrupulous, and that you couldn't trust them. And, strange as it may appear, the Academy had just the same ideas of Clinton, so bitter had been the rivalry for years past.

This intimacy did not in any way lessen their keen desire to beat one another in various sports and pastimes. Each of the boys had a sail-boat, and there was scarcely a day went by on which there was not a race of some sort. Sometimes one was winner and sometimes another, for all three little vessels had about the same speed, and it was usually a question of seamanship. On the whole, Bob was the best sailor, Ted the best swimmer, and Bunny the best in a canoe. Still, none of the boys was very far behind the others, and you may be sure that not one of them admitted inferiority in any particular field.

Perhaps the best fun of all was "water-tag," as the boys called it. It is not known who invented the game, but it is played in sail-boats, and the one who is "it" tries to touch another boat as they sail about the bay. There are boundaries, and as each boy has to handle the sheet, tiller, and centreboard all by

himself, it requires great skill and becomes very exciting.

There was a good deal of friendly banter about football, of course. Ted pretended to be sorry for Clinton when the teams should meet in the fall, while Bunny, less talkative, said he'd wait and see.

Of course they had footballs, and one of the things they did every day—for a little while, at least—was to kick to one another, and Bunny, who was by far the best drop-kicker, told Ted where his trouble lay. Drop-kicking is mostly a matter of doing it over and over again; but there are some fundamental things about it that no amount of practice will overcome if you don't know them. And it was one of these that Bunny showed Ted, never thinking how some day it might be used against him.

"I wish I knew how you did it," Ted said, in dismay, after Bunny had beaten him time and again.

"It's easy enough," Bunny answered, and then, a little because he liked the feeling that he was coaching, and a good deal because he was generous, Bunny explained the secret.

"You see, Ted," he said, "*you* always look at the goal-posts when you kick. Now you want to look at the ball, and see your toe hit it just as it strikes the ground, so you can tell what you are doing."

"But how about direction?" asked Ted.

"Well, you get that before you kick," Bunny went on. "Hargrave told me about it. You get your direction when you plant your feet in a line with the

goal-posts, and all you have to do is to drop the ball and swing your foot in that line. You'll find it works all right when you've tried it a few times, but you'll have trouble watching the ball instead of the posts at first. I know it took me the longest time to get over that habit."

Ted tried, and, after a good many failures, at last succeeded in keeping his eye on the ball, which probably, in every department of the game, is the most essential thing to learn.

And so the summer passed until the day came for the great canoe-race, which needs a chapter or two to itself.

V

ON THE LINE

THERE were a number of things that set Bunny thinking that summer. First of all he began to learn what it was like to have a home, and he concluded rightly that Mrs. Struthers had most to do with it. She, good lady, petted Bunny as she did her own Bob, and on a boy who had never known a caress except from old Susan, his colored nurse, the effect was immediate: he began to love her dearly. Sometimes she praised and sometimes she scolded, and Bunny was never sure which he liked best. Then, too, Mrs. Struthers seemed much concerned about his hurting himself, so when she told him he mustn't dive off the roof of the pier because she always worried, he began to wonder why, and one day he asked her.

"You silly boy," said Mrs. Struthers, drawing him down to the sofa upon which she was sitting, and putting an arm about his shoulders, "such a question to ask! I'm afraid you'd hurt yourself."

"But I'd get well again," said Bunny.

"But suppose you didn't get well," Mrs. Struthers explained. "Suppose you injured yourself per-

manently and were a cripple for life, think how sorry I would be, and how I would blame myself for having let you do it. Wouldn't you be sorry if Bob was a cripple and couldn't run or play like other boys?"

"Yes," said Bunny, hesitatingly. "Yes, I would; but I never thought of it before."

"Of course you didn't, but you see I do." Mrs. Struthers went on: "I think of you all the time, and when you boys are out of my sight I'm wondering what might happen to you—and there are so many things. You see, mothers have a lot to worry them."

"I didn't know," said Bunny, rather absently.

"Well, you know now," Mrs. Struthers said, giving him a little hug, "and hereafter, when you are doing something dangerous, just remember I'm worrying about you, and that if anything happened I would be sorry all my life long."

"About me?" asked Bunny, a little incredulously.

"Yes, Bunny, about you," said Mrs. Struthers, and kissed him.

That conversation opened Bunny's eyes to many things, and it is to be noted that from then on of the three boys Bunny was the most careful to see that they arrived home on time from sailing, and that, so far as he could understand, they didn't do anything to worry Bob's mother. And, of course, he stopped diving off the roof of the pier, which *was* dangerous, though a good deal of fun, too.

Then Mr. Struthers was a great surprise to Bunny.

True, he was only at Blue Point over Sundays; that is, he came early on Saturday afternoon and went back on Monday morning, but that time was the best in the week for the boys. Mr. Struthers didn't seem very much older than they. At any rate, he was out in the boats, kicked the football, swam, sailed, and was just one of them from early in the morning till bedtime. This gave Bunny a very different idea of what fathers were like, and naturally he couldn't help comparing Bob's father with his own, whom he scarcely ever saw.

There were, of course, many things that Bunny couldn't understand—no boy could understand them—and so he came to wrong conclusions about his father. Mr. Reeves did care very much indeed for his son, only, for one reason or another, the opportunity had never come to show it.

All of this doesn't seem to have much to do with the canoe-race that always came toward the close of the season; but it had, as you shall see.

This canoe-race was an annual affair for all the people living along the bay. It was in a measure a return for the sailing-races that took place off Toms River in August, and there was always a good deal of fun over it. Men and boys came from as far away as Barnegat, and there were races for all classes. At night there was a big ball at the hotel, when the medals were distributed to the winners, and altogether it was a considerable event.

The boys had been practising for it weeks ahead.

They knew that there were other fellows along the bay that would try to take the prize away if they could, though there were those in Blue Point who predicted that Bunny Reeves would win. On the other hand, Bob, who was the tallest of the three, had won the year before, and was no mean opponent; but there were certain little tricks that Bunny had been taught in camp, twists of the paddle that he had learned from the natives around the Adirondacks, that gave him an advantage which he hardly realized, added to which he was stronger than Bob. Still, he had never exerted himself as he might, and really didn't care very much whether he won or not, so that it was an open question in the little town which of the two was the better.

At last the day of the race came. Everybody in the Struthers household was very much excited, and Mr. Struthers had arrived the night before, so that he would be on hand the first thing in the morning. Mrs. Struthers talked of nothing but the hope that "her boys" would win, and this puzzled Bunny, for he knew they both couldn't win. He concluded that Mrs. Struthers's remarks about "her boys" really meant Bob, and that she hadn't said so outright for fear of hurting his feelings.

Bob, Ted, and Bunny were very busy, and from early morning until the race in the afternoon were at the water's edge trimming their canoes and putting things in shape for the contest. They looked over the other fellows who were to paddle against them,

and Bob maintained that he wasn't afraid of any except Littlefield, who came from Toms River.

"You want to look out for Pratt," said Bunny, speaking of a boy from Island Heights.

"I'm not worried about him," Bob replied, with scorn. "It will be between you and me, I'm thinking."

"You'll have to paddle to get it, young man," retorted Bunny. "All the same, you watch out for Pratt."

Ted, who really had no expectation of winning, was inclined to side with Bunny, but Bob was confident that, if the prize was to go away from Blue Point, Littlefield would be the one to take it.

The weather was all any one could wish for. There was scarcely any breeze, and what there was came off the ocean, so that the sand-dunes protected the bay, and there was scarcely a ripple on the water. The races were divided into those for old men, young men, married men, boys of fourteen or over, and boys under fourteen. Our boys came in the next to the last class, and there were altogether seven entries, four of them being from watering-places farther down the coast, so that there was considerable interest manifested in it, not only by the boys themselves, but by the people of the several resorts represented.

As the hour for the race approached every available space on the dock was filled with people talking and shouting for their favorites. Visitors from

places down the bay who had sailed up in the morning anchored their various craft, and when at length the first race was called there was hardly room to sail outside the triangle that marked the course. The referee and judges darted here and there in a tiny motor-boat, fixing flags, warning people off, and being as fussy and important as these officials usually are.

Mr. and Mrs. Struthers had places at the end of the dock overlooking the start and finish line—the first people you met when you came up the steps from the landing-stage.

Just before their race was called, Bunny and Bob and Ted, with their opponents, got into their canoes.

"Now, remember, I expect one of my boys to win, you know!" cried Mrs. Struthers.

"You can't have any dinner unless you do!" shouted Mr. Struthers, banteringly.

Ted Halliday's mother was there, too, and she called encouragement after him, as did the mothers, fathers, and sisters of the other boys. Each contestant seemed to have some one in that crowd to cheer him except Bunny Reeves—at least, that is the thought that came to him as he stepped into his canoe. Of all those people there was not one who cared a rap whether he won or not. Even Mr. Struthers wanted Bob to win, which was perfectly natural. None of the cheers that sounded in his ears were for him, and he felt a little heartsore and blue as he sat in his canoe waiting for the final word.

But that wasn't the worst of it. Not only was there no one who cared whether he won or not, but all of them wished he would lose. That wasn't fair, for it seemed to give the others an advantage. This made him angry, and he shook his head doggedly and said to himself that he would win, anyway, to show them.

"I wish father was here," he said to himself. "Perhaps he'd be interested like Mr. Struthers is in Bob if I won; but he isn't, and no one cares." Which was a mistake, for at that moment some one was hurrying along the dock who took a very keen interest in the outcome of that race.

All this time the referee had been getting the canoes lined up to his satisfaction, and a moment later a pistol was fired, the paddles splashed as they took the water, and the race began.

VI

CHANGING GOALS

IT was a triangular course, and twice around constituted the race for the boys. As has been said, Bunny had his eye on Pratt, the Island Heights man, who looked strong and had a long reach, the thing that counts in a canoe-race, other things being equal. Bob, you remember, was thinking principally of Littlefield, a rather overgrown fellow from Toms River.

There was a lot of splashing at the start, and, boy-like, a considerable expenditure of strength to get in the lead. Bunny took his time, and in consequence was the last to cross the starting-line; but he was in his swing at once, and cool into the bargain. Bunny was always like that in a contest.

Ahead of him he picked out Pratt, who was starting well up in front, with Bob and Littlefield on even terms.

They held these positions for nearly the first leg of the lap, when Bunny slowly drew up behind Pratt, and in so doing came to within two or three lengths of the leaders, Littlefield and Bob.

It was any one's race as yet, but the two in front were setting a fast pace, and when they made the

turn at the first leg Littlefield put still more power in his stroke in order to pass Bob and get the inside course. Bob sprinted to hold his position, and the two began to draw away rapidly from the others. Pratt, evidently not caring to hurry at that stage of the race, let the clear water between him and the leaders widen. Bunny was satisfied with his position behind Pratt, and so, for the greater part of the second leg, they were in the rear, although the distance was never very great between the first and last man.

Bob and Littlefield, however, were having a fight for it. The larger man meant to get the inside position if he could, and he was pushing Bob pretty hard.

Bunny, sitting back and watching, began to grow anxious for Bob. He knew his friend couldn't keep that pace up for the entire race, and he knew, also, that it would be wisdom to reserve all the strength he could for the final sprint at the end. Still Bob kept right at it, and as they turned into the final leg of the first lap and were heading for the dock, Bunny was indeed worried, for although he told himself that he meant to win, he wanted Bob to come in second, and at this rate his friend was likely to finish last, or, at any rate, very near it. Bunny put a little more power into his stroke. He wanted to come up with Pratt, to see what he would do, and, as the Island Heights man held to his steady swing, Bunny in a moment or two was even with him, and saw a smile

on the other's face as he watched the leaders. It was clear that if this went on Bob and Littlefield were both out of it.

"Perhaps," thought Bunny, "Littlefield is playing for Pratt to win by tiring Bob out in the beginning. Anyway, it looks like it."

Whether this was a fact or not, Bunny meant to stop it, and began putting on more power, intending, at any sacrifice, to come up with Bob and warn him of his danger. He was surprised to find that, instead of letting him pass, as he had supposed he would, Pratt began to paddle faster also, and soon both came up with the leaders.

As they reached the turn in front of the dock the cheering became audible to them, and "Littlefield!" "Struthers!" "Blue Point!" and "Toms River!" were shouted by the crowd, who seemed very much excited.

As they began the first leg of the last lap, Littlefield, with an extra spurt, forced Bob into second place, and Bunny, with a twist he knew well, nosed his bow inside of Pratt's and came up behind Bob.

"Take it easy!" he called. "Take it easy! There's lots of time yet, and if you keep this up you're out of it. Watch out for Pratt!"

Bob nodded, and eased up, as he was told. He knew that at this rate he was out of the race, but he still had enough in him to go the rest of the way at a fair clip. Now, however, Pratt began to forge ahead on the outside of Bunny, and the latter, in

order to head him off, was forced to come up beside Bob.

"You keep that pace, old man!" he called. "Never you mind what we do!" And then he settled down to have it out with Pratt, who plainly meant to pass him.

Now the real tug-of-war began between the two. Bunny would have preferred a waiting race--one in which the last leg of the triangle would be a sprint; but it was necessary to wear out Pratt before that, or Bob wouldn't have a show. Littlefield was plainly giving up, and relinquished his lead to the others, who presently passed him.

Bunny was on the inside of the course, and Pratt, in order to take the place, had to pass Bunny by a length in order to cut across his bow. Plainly the advantage was all in Bunny's favor, and, moreover, he knew that, if you keep twisting the bow of your canoe often enough, there develops a pain in your wrist that soon makes paddling almost agony. So, to make Pratt work harder, Bunny permitted him to almost pass, and then, as the latter headed his boat across, he would sprint ahead, and Pratt, in order not to foul, was forced to turn his boat sharply. These tactics Bunny kept up until, by the end of the first leg, Pratt was not so anxious to take the lead, and the pain in his wrist was growing.

But that didn't suit Bunny. He wanted to put Pratt out of the race, so he began to sprint, hoping that the other would follow, and then, evidently,

Pratt began to get rattled and started to beat the water recklessly, at which Bunny laughed. This didn't tend to make Pratt any more comfortable, and soon he was again even with Bunny, trying to pass him on the outside, while the latter continued his tactics of letting the Island Heights boy get a little ahead, and then forcing him to turn out suddenly, to the great weakening of his right wrist.

On the latter half of the second leg Pratt gave up, and Bunny knew that there was nothing more to fear from him. His chief anxiety now was for Bob, and he looked over his shoulder and found the others strung out quite a way behind, with Pratt between them. He didn't know whether Bob could pass Pratt or not, but, whatever happened, he knew he could win, and one of Mrs. Struthers's boys, at any rate, would get the prize.

Bunny's heart gave a sudden bound as he thought of Mrs. Struthers. It wouldn't be nearly so nice for her if he won as it would be if Bob came in first. Where was Bob, anyway? Again he looked over his shoulder, and was glad to find that his friend was creeping up. Just then he turned into the last leg at least five lengths ahead of the others, and had a good view of those following.

Pratt was evidently in distress. He was lifting his paddle mainly with one hand, and Bunny knew that his right wrist was of no use to him and very painful. He had tried paddling with a nearly paralyzed wrist himself, and knew how impossible

it is. Littlefield, behind Bob, was struggling desperately, which never makes a canoe go fast. Bob, too, was in anything but good condition, but he had pluck, and, although that early sprinting had taken the best out of him, he still might beat Pratt.

Bunny looked to the finish, and saw the flags and handkerchiefs fluttering on the pier. He couldn't see the faces yet, but he knew Mrs. Struthers was there, waving as enthusiastically as any one, and probably shouting for Bob as hard as she could.

"She's been awfully good to me," Bunny thought, as he paddled along. "I wish she was my mother, I'd show her!" He really was taking it very easily, and didn't care if the other boats did come a little closer.

"If there was any one wanting to see me win I'd just leave this bunch behind, and show them what speeding a canoe is like," he muttered, under his breath. "But there isn't," he added, and his heart grew a little heavy. "I'll show them, anyhow!" he said, and began to paddle faster.

A moment later he dropped his stroke again. "I do wish Bob would hurry up," he said; and then, not realizing how little attention he had been paying to the race, nor how slowly he had been going, he was suddenly awakened to his position by hearing the splash of a paddle right beside him.

He turned in a flash. Had Pratt caught up again? He breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that it was Bob. The latter was red in the face and laboring

with panting breath, splashing with the hurry and confused movements of a tired boy, but full of grit and meaning to win if he could.

Bunny smiled and put on a little more speed. They were nearing the finish now, and presently one could almost distinguish faces. He could see Mrs. Struthers's blue dress in the sunshine, and began to feel very comfortable inside.

"Her boys would win now, that was sure," he thought. He wished Bob had a little more strength, so that they could sprint home, for he didn't want to beat him very badly. It isn't fun to be beaten badly—and then Mrs. Struthers—

"She only said 'boys' so as not to hurt my feelings," Bunny murmured to himself; and then: "She'll be awfully disappointed if Bob doesn't win, and—why shouldn't he win? She's been awfully good to me, and—why, of course he must win! What do I care? But I can't let them think I'm giving in to him."

From the dock the finish of that race was most exciting. The manœuvres that brought the two friends into the lead on the last leg were quite understood by those watching, and when Bunny went ahead, and later Bob crept up to him, the people became more and more excited. For a little while it looked as if Bunny Reeves was quite fresh in spite of his having tired out the Island Heights boy, but he wasn't going very fast—and surely Bob Struthers was lessening the distance between them. As they

came nearer Bob was still gaining, and a tall man standing beside Mrs. Struthers said,

"I'm afraid your boy won't hold out."

"I don't know about Bob," she said, with a smile; "but, you know, they are both my boys."

"And you really don't care which wins?" he asked.

"No, I really don't. You see, Bunny is a dear, and—no, I don't think I care if Bob is beaten."

"Well, I should care very much indeed if he were my boy," the man returned, and they were silent again.

In the mean time a change had taken place. Bob was even with Bunny now, and the latter seemed to be laboring at his paddle, as if he had suddenly become very much exhausted.

"It was that last sprint with Pratt that used him up, I guess," said Mr. Struthers. "It's a case of nip-and-tuck now. Go it, Bobby!"

"It's just a case of grit. It's the fellow with the nerve that wins this race," said the tall man to Mrs. Struthers.

Mrs. Struthers looked anxiously over the water. "I don't want either of them to lose," she said, almost with a sob. "See poor Bunny. He's splashing more than ever."

"He's giving up!" said the tall man, with a rather bitter laugh. "I'd rather see him anything than a boy without nerve."

But Mrs. Struthers wasn't paying attention then,

THE FINISH: NIP-AND-TUCK

for the end of the race was at hand. Bunny was struggling desperately—at least so it appeared to those who watched; but slowly, a little at a time, Bob's canoe crept up beside him until, just as they reached the finish-line, it shot ahead and won.

Amid much cheering the two boys paddled over to the landing-stage, and Bob, tired but very happy, ran up the steps to his family, while Bunny came more slowly behind him.

Mrs. Struthers beamed upon her boys, and, putting an arm around each, kissed them.

"I'm sorry you didn't both win," she said.

"The boy with the nerve won, and I should like to congratulate him," said the tall man, stepping forward.

Bunny turned sharply, and looked up into the face of his father.

VII

A DOUBTFUL DECISION

IT would be hard to tell what Bunny thought or felt when he saw his father and realized that he had been watching the race, and that, after all, there was some one who was interested in his winning. Perhaps he didn't feel anything except surprise at the first moment of the meeting, but very soon the significance of his father's words of congratulation to Bob made him feel most uncomfortable. His father supposed he had not won because he hadn't the nerve. Anything was better than that, and Bunny grew heartsick at the bare idea. All the pleasure he had anticipated in Mrs. Struthers's delight in Bob's winning was gone.

"Well, sir, I don't suppose you expected to see me," his father began, as they shook hands.

"No, sir," said Bunny, "I didn't."

Then Mr. Reeves turned to Mrs. Struthers, and the party walked back to the town, Bunny following.

When they arrived at the cottage Mr. Struthers tried to persuade Mr. Reeves to come in and have tea with them, but the latter insisted that he must go directly back to New York, and had run down

only for an hour or so to thank them for looking after his boy.

"And I want to congratulate you again over Bob's splendid show of nerve to-day. It isn't so much the winning that I care about as it is the pluck he showed. It was fine. I'm glad my boy has such an example. Now I'm off. Thank you again," and, motioning to Bunny, he started off toward the railroad station.

Bunny walked beside his father silently, waiting for something—he knew not what; but he rather dreaded the opening words. They came at last.

"Well, sir, you seem to be having a pretty good time here. It was very kind of Mrs. Struthers to ask you, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed!" replied Bunny, with enthusiasm. He was much relieved to find that his father spoke in so kindly a way. Usually he had such a brisk, business-like air that the boy was always more or less embarrassed.

"And Bob seems like a nice boy, too," said his father.

"Oh, he's fine!" Bunny agreed.

"Yes," Mr. Reeves went on, "and I particularly admired the way he won the canoe-race this afternoon. He has what you evidently lack—nerve!"

Bunny made no reply. Not to have nerve was about the worst thing that could be said of a boy, and here was his father accusing him of that very thing. To make a denial meant an explanation of

the real reason why he had lost, and that he didn't wish to do for several reasons.

"I am glad to find you are not ready with excuses," continued Mr. Reeves; "but I want you to understand that I am not complaining because you lost the race. That makes little difference one way or the other. It is the *way* you lost it that disappointed me more than I can tell you. You had it won, and then when Bob Struthers forced you to fight for it you gave up. Yes, sir, you gave up! Everybody saw you and understood. I suppose it is because you haven't any nerve that the boys call you 'Bunny.' Rabbits are proverbially cowardly animals. You see, my boy, you weren't willing to suffer a little, and that is what you must learn just as soon as you can. When you feel tired and want to stop, then is the time when you must work all the harder if you expect to win anything in this world. What was the matter with you?" he ended.

"There wasn't anything the matter," said Bunny. "I didn't win, that's all."

"It is not all by any means," his father returned, rather sternly. "The winning is the smallest part of it, as I said before. It's a question of nerve. Do you know what I do for a living?"

"No, sir," replied Bunny.

"Well," his father went on, "I build bridges. Some day I expect you to take up the work where I leave it, but unless you acquire some courage you

won't be of any use to me or to the business. I hear you play football."

"Yes, sir," answered Bunny.

"I suppose you think it takes nerve to play football, eh?"

"I never thought of it, sir," said Bunny.

"It is at least supposed to, as you will find when you go to college," continued Mr. Reeves; "it did in my day, at any rate. But don't get the notion that when you're out of college you can leave your nerve behind you; it is then you need it. And just remember that it takes more grit and a cooler head to stand on an eight-inch steel beam, with nothing else between you and a river a hundred or so feet below, than it does to play any kind of a game in school or college. And that's what you must learn to do."

Bunny made no reply. He didn't understand quite what this talk was about, but he was distinctly interested in his father's business. The building of bridges seemed a fine thing to do. He had seen men swinging out in the air on steel beams that looked no bigger than a plank from where he was, and he appreciated that it meant something.

They walked on in silence till they reached the station, and a few minutes later the train was ready to start.

"Now, remember," said Mr. Reeves, in parting with his son, "I don't blame you for losing that canoe-race; in fact, I don't believe much in athletics, anyway. But when you go into a thing I want

you to win if you can, and, if you lose, don't let it be because you lacked the courage to fight it out till the last. It was the giving up that disappointed me in you. That's a thing I hate to see in any one. Stick it out to the bitter end, no matter what you are doing, and then, if you lose, you at least have the satisfaction of knowing that you have done the best you could."

With a hand-shake Mr. Reeves said good-bye and boarded the train.

"I hope I haven't done the boy an injustice," he thought. "At least, he didn't talk and make excuses. That's something. I guess I'll have to arrange to become better acquainted with him. I suppose he will think I'm as cross as a bear. Too bad! Too bad! If I only wasn't so busy and didn't have to travel all over the country constantly! 'Bunny!'" he muttered, "'Bunny!' I wish they didn't call him 'Bunny.'"

The boy's thoughts were more or less vague. All he felt was a sort of numbness. If he had been younger he would have cried and been done with it. But crying wasn't Bunny's way: he kept all his heartaches and disappointments inside, and didn't say a word to any one about how he felt.

At dinner that night Mrs. Struthers tried to make him happy, and laughed at his silence, banteringly telling him that he mustn't mind if Bob did beat him, and that when he had another chance he would surely win.

Bob himself was very nice about it, saying that he never expected it would turn out as it had, and that he didn't believe if they were racing alone he could do it; but he hadn't a notion that Bunny had deliberately let him win.

Nor did Bunny regret his action. He saw that Mr. and Mrs. Struthers were glad, and were looking forward eagerly and with pride to the evening, when Bob would be presented with his medal before all the people in the town; so, after all, there was some compensation for Bunny. But he kept remembering about what his father had said, and wasn't very happy. He wanted to go off by himself to think things over; and so, when everybody was laughing and talking about the race, he went down to the dock and decided to take out the *Beth* and sail away from all the noise and gayety.

He found the place deserted. Everybody, including the boatmen, were at the hotel or going there for the evening's entertainment, and no one was thinking of sailing. Bunny paddled out to where his little craft was moored, and, tying his canoe up to the stake, made sail, and slipped out into the moonlit bay to think over the events of the afternoon.

The Strutherses didn't miss Bunny until the medals were being distributed, and then Mrs. Struthers began to ask where he was.

"I thought he was here all the time," said Mr. Struthers, looking around. "He's probably with the other boys."

But he wasn't. And after asking Ted and Bob if they had seen him, and finding no one had, they came to the conclusion that he had been more disappointed at not winning the race than they had supposed.

"I didn't think he cared very much," said Mrs. Struthers.

"No more did I," agreed her husband. "I suppose he felt disgraced because his father was there. Mr. Reeves was rather hard on him, I thought."

"His father doesn't know him," Mrs. Struthers insisted, positively. "I don't think he's a very happy boy—it makes a difference, not having a mother. I wish he hadn't gone off. We must make him feel more comfortable. Still, I must confess I didn't expect him not to appear when Bob was given the prize. It looks as if he were envious, and that is not a nice trait. And Bunny is a nice boy all through."

"We'll find him at home when we get there," Mr. Struthers said. "I fancy it was harder on him than we supposed, on account of his father's turning up that way."

"Who is Mr. Reeves?" asked Mrs. Struthers.

"He's one of the best engineers in the United States," Mr. Struthers explained. "He's the head of the Reeves Bridge Company, the biggest concern of the kind we have. He has to travel all over the country, and he tells me that he has a contract in New Zealand that will take him there for six

months shortly. So, you see, he's a pretty busy man, and, under the circumstances, it is easily understandable how he has, in a way, neglected his boy. He admitted as much to me."

"It was very nice of him to come down here to thank us," said Mrs. Struthers.

"He really is a fine fellow," Mr. Struthers went on. "They tell many stories of him, and 'Reeves's nerve' is a byword in business circles."

"Well, I think he might find time to get acquainted with his son," said Mrs. Struthers. "He ought to learn what a fine boy he has."

It was later than they thought when they arrived at the cottage after the festivities at the hotel, and, although they expected to find Bunny waiting up for them, he was not there.

"He's gone to bed," said Bob.

"Go up and make sure," his mother told him.

But Bunny wasn't in bed; in fact, he wasn't to be found anywhere.

"Perhaps he took his boat out, and forgot about the time," Mr. Struthers suggested. "He'll turn up all right. Don't get frightened."

"But he would know that I'd be worried," Mrs. Struthers insisted, "and I'm sure if he was all right he would be back again unless something kept him."

"But what could keep him?" demanded Bob.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Struthers; "but I wish you would ask, or see, if the *Beth* has been taken out."

Bob went off to the dock, and was soon in the midst of much excitement. The boatmen, returning from the hotel, found, upon examination, that many things were missing. A number of small craft had disappeared, and one of the largest catboats on the bay, besides a sloop belonging to some strangers from down the coast, who had expected to sail back by moonlight. Also the *Beth* was gone.

There was little sleep for a good many people in Blue Point that night. But where was Bunny?

VIII

A TRICK PLAY

BUNNY slipped out into the moonlight in his boat, thinking of little besides his own troubles, and feeling keenly that his father had not understood. He wondered what the result would have been if he had explained that he had lost the race because he wanted Bob's mother to be glad. It seemed to him that Mrs. Struthers was the nicest person in the world, and it was not much for him to do for her. But he knew he couldn't make that explanation to his father—or any one else, for that matter—because it would have robbed Bob of his victory, and Bunny wanted Bob to have it. Then he began to speculate upon whether he would have acted as generously had he known that his father was looking on, and came to the very honest conclusion that he would not. Instead, he would have won "hands down," as he expressed it to himself.

But, after all, that race didn't count much now, except that it had given his father the impression that he hadn't any nerve, and Bunny felt the sting of that very keenly. As a matter of fact, it had never occurred to him to ask himself whether he

had nerve or not. When there was something to do he went ahead and did it as well as he could, but he was quite certain that the boys didn't call him "Bunny" because they thought he was afraid.

All this time he was sailing a straight course toward the mouth of the river that empties into the upper bay, and as he slid along in the water, almost noiselessly with the steady beam wind he was carrying, he was scarcely conscious of his surroundings. He was perplexed with the situation of his relations with his father, but out of all this thinking one comforting circumstance presented itself to him. His father evidently was interested in him, and that was something. As he began to puzzle over the matter less bitterly, he concluded that he wasn't a coward, and that there would be a chance to prove it to his father sooner or later. It was just a mistake, and time would put it straight.

On the other hand, he had gained a number of facts concerning his father. He was glad to find that he was a bridge-builder, and that some day he was going to be one himself. He felt it was a man's work, and he preferred it to the prospect of spending most of his time in an office, which was his previous idea of what business consisted of.

The more he considered the events of the day the more cheerful he became.

"I'll show him some time I'm not that kind of a bunny," he said to himself.

Meanwhile he was sailing up the river, scarcely

conscious of the passing time or what was going on about him; but the moon was getting low, and, with a start, he looked at his watch rather guiltily.

It was ten o'clock, and with an exclamation of surprise he put the tiller hard down and brought his boat about. He knew he couldn't reach the dock short of an hour, and that would mean eleven. However, considering the festivities that were going on at the hotel, he would probably be back before the Strutherses reached the cottage. He was glad he had looked at his watch in time, because he wouldn't have Mrs. Struthers worrying over him for the world.

As he turned into the bay from the river he was surprised to see two large sail-boats bearing down on him. At first he thought it must be some people from the lower bay on their way home from the dance at the hotel, and this made him wish he had started back sooner.

As they came nearer, however, he was sure that he was mistaken in this, because there was no noise aboard either boat, which, in a party of young men and girls on a moonlight sail, would be sufficiently unusual for even Bunny to remark.

"It is funny," he said to himself, "and that first one is certainly the *Olympia*. What's old Captain John doing out this time of night without a party?"

Capt. John Clark, one of the native boatmen, owned the *Olympia*, and was a great favorite of all the boys.

"Hello, Captain John!" Bunny called, as they came within hailing distance. "Where are you bound for?"

There was no reply, and Bunny called again, "Hello, Captain John!"

This time a gruff voice answered him across the water.

"Captain John ain't here. We've hired this boat for a sail."

Bunny could see now that there were two men in the *Olympia* — one standing by the tiller, and the other crouched along the deck outside the combing. The *Olympia* was a big, twenty-five-foot cat, with a roomy cabin, very popular for parties, and Bunny knew that Captain John would go out in any weather or at any time, day or night, if any one wanted to rent his boat, but he had never heard of his letting it go without him. Sometimes he permitted other people to sail her when there was plenty of water and not much breeze, but he never knew the old man not to go. Captain John loved his boat, or at least he seemed to, and there wasn't one better kept, public or private, in the upper bay.

The circumstance of the captain of the boat not being on her impressed Bunny as being distinctly unusual, but he had no suspicion of anything wrong as yet. However, as he passed he saw a string of small boats trailing along behind, and this excited his curiosity.

"What are they doing with all those boats?" he

said to himself; and then his attention was attracted by the other yacht bearing down on him.

She was sloop-rigged, and quite unfamiliar to Bunny, so he didn't hail; but when he saw that she, too, had a string of small craft strung out aft, his suspicions were immediately aroused.

"Hey!" he called, "what are you doing with all those boats?"

No answer came to him, and he luffed, spilling the wind out of his sail and drifting.

"Hey!" he called again—"I say, what are you doing with those boats?"

Still there was no answer, and the sloop passed on without a word.

Bunny watched for a moment, and then suddenly hauled in his sheet, came about, and started after them.

The wind was not strong, and the larger boats, dragging a considerable tow behind them, were not going as fast as Bunny in his smaller, unhampered little vessel, so that he soon came up with them again. He was now convinced that these men were stealing.

"They're just pirates," he said to himself. "They knew that everybody would be at the hotel, so they're taking everything they can."

"Where did you fellows get those boats?" he shouted, as soon as he came within hailing distance, and still there was no reply.

"Well, I'm going along to see what you do with them, anyhow!" Bunny called.

At this there was an outburst of rage on the sloop, and an angry voice shouted: "You get home and mind your own business! They're our boats, and we're goin' bluefishin'."

This, as Bunny knew, was a palpable lie, and as he came nearer he could see that there were canoes among the string trailing out behind, which were the last things bluefishermen would have with them.

"Yes, it looks like it," Bunny retorted, scornfully. "I never heard of any one going after bluefish in small boats before, and I'd like to see you outside in a canoe."

"You get out of this; it's none of your business what we're doing. You get home!" came a harsh voice across the water.

"Hey, Bill, what's the matter?" came a hail from the *Olympia*, some little way ahead.

"There's a kid follerin' us, hintin' that we stole these boats."

"I'll steal him!" shouted the gruff voice from the *Olympia*. "Can't you send him home?"

"If he don't go pretty quick, I'll make him wish he had!" was the answer; but Bunny wasn't at all worried about that.

"I'll catch them at the draw," he thought. "I can beat them there and warn the man. He'll hold them up." But Bunny had miscalculated. The two boats, as soon as they came to the mouth of the river, changed their course and went up it instead of down the bay, as he had expected.

"Why are they doing that?" he asked himself; but he hadn't long to think of this, because he was again hailed from the sloop.

"Hey, young fellow, are you going back home or not?"

This time Bunny was silent, but he didn't alter his course.

"Cast off that tow, Bill," he heard a voice say. "They won't drift far in this air, and we can pick 'em up afterward. I'm goin' after that kid. Stand by to haul in that sheet and watch your centre-board."

Bunny's heart gave a leap of excitement as he realized that the men were coming after him. The wind had freshened, and there was no doubt that the larger boat could outsail his; but that nerved him, and he resolved that they would have trouble in catching him. It would be a good deal like a game of water-tag, and Bunny was rather skilful at that.

"Trim the jib-sheets!" came the order from the sloop.

Bunny stood up and, putting his back against the tiller, prepared to meet the first move the other should make.

He was not in doubt for long. The larger boat trimmed her sails flat and began to steer a course that would either run Bunny down or force him ashore, neither of which Bunny meant him to do.

As he eased his sheet a thought occurred to him.

There was plenty of water in the river, even close to the shores, but there were two or three treacherous sand-spits that reached far into the stream. Bunny resolved that if it were possible he would get that big sloop aground, and, as the wind held, they would have considerable trouble to get her off again. At first he thought he would only have one boat to contend against, but as they went along, the sloop driving him inshore, he saw that the *Olympia*, too, had cast off her tow and was luffing, waiting to trap him between them.

"This is fun!" said Bunny to himself, with a chuckle. "And I guess I've got to do the best sailing I've ever done, or there will be a missing Bunny to-night." And he eased his sheet still more and drew nearer the land.

That shore, however, was not the one Bunny wanted to make for, so in a moment or two he came about, went close-hauled on the port tack, and headed down the river for the other side.

Both the boats did likewise, and Bunny saw that they were overhauling him rapidly, but he knew that he could come about in half the time of either of them. The sloop especially, he noticed, was slow in stays, so he wasn't worried at all, but kept his course, pointing up as close to the wind as he could.

The sloop kept off, so that the two were fast converging on a common point, with the *Olympia* bearing down on them from above, running free.

"I GUESS I'VE GOT TO DO THE BEST SAILING I'VE EVER DONE, OR THERE WILL BE A MISSING BUNNY TO-NIGHT"

The three boats approached one another rapidly, and Bunny needed all his nerve to keep his course. Evidently the men in the sloop thought they had him, for one of them shouted: "We told you to go home, and it's your own fault if we sink you! And that's what we're going to do!"

But Bunny didn't reply—he hadn't any time to talk back. He was busy easing his sheet a little at a time, so that the others wouldn't notice that he was preparing to come about.

With the rush of the water from the big sloop almost splashing aboard his little craft, Bunny held on. There was a point of sand running out just to port of him, and he never swerved, hoping that the sloop, which drew nearly three feet more than the *Beth*, would follow.

"We've got you now!" shouted the man. "Will you go home if we let you off?"

Bunny didn't answer. He stood there tense, sailing his boat with all the skill he had, and holding on desperately while he watched the bowsprit of the sloop coming nearer and nearer, inch by inch.

"Look out for that sand-spit, Billy!" called the gruff voice from the *Olympia*.

But the warning came too late. Just at that moment Bunny let his sheet run, putting his tiller hard to starboard.

"Oh, you would, would you!" shouted Billy from the sloop, meeting Bunny's manœuvre almost as soon as it was made; and so quickly did he follow

that the low bowsprit just grazed Bunny's head as it crossed the stern of the *Beth*.

"We've got you sure!" shouted Billy; but at that moment there was a harsh grating, as the sloop, taking the sand, came up all standing, while the smaller boat, clearing, was out of reach.

Bunny laughed at the sounds of dismay and rage that came from the stranded craft. But there was no time for him to think of anything but his boat; for the *Olympia*, foreseeing his plan, was almost upon him.

IX

FOUL TACTICS

IN the mean time the excitement at the dock at Blue Point was increasing momentarily. The news that a great many boats had been stolen spread rapidly, and soon the dock was almost as full of people as it had been in the afternoon when the races were going on. There was much shouting by those who were searching vainly for tenders, so that they might visit their sailing-craft anchored in the bay, lanterns were flashing here and there across the water, while men hailed one another to announce losses or to assure those on shore that their property was safe. Only two sail-boats were missing—the *Olympia* and a sloop; but there were at least ten or a dozen rowboats and canoes that could not be found. Moreover, upon investigation it was discovered that many small articles, like bilge-pumps, anchors, brass lanterns, and cabin-fittings, had been taken, so that altogether the theft was considerable.

Old Capt. John Clark was particularly upset, and went running about asking every one if they had seen the *Olympia*, finding it hard to believe that it had been stolen.

"It ain't possible," he kept repeating—"it ain't possible they'd take the *Olymp*. She must be hereabouts somewhere." And off he'd go in another direction, looking for his precious craft.

Mr. and Mrs. Struthers waited a long time for Bob to return and report on Bunny's disappearance; but that young man, very much excited over the robbery, forgot all about his father and mother waiting for news, and joined the people on the dock in the search for missing property.

Finally, Mr. Struthers, beginning to be anxious, decided he would walk down to the dock himself to see where Bob was, and Mrs. Struthers, sure that there was real trouble of some sort, insisted upon going with him.

"I can't stay here alone thinking of all that might happen," she answered to Mr. Struthers's advice to stay where she was. "I am convinced that something has happened to the boy or he would not stay away like this."

So Mr. and Mrs. Struthers hurried to the dock, where they found an excuse for Bob's neglect of them.

"The *Dart* is all right," Bob announced, excitedly, "but the *Beth* is gone, and so are both the canoes. The *Olympia* and a big sloop from down the bay are gone, too, and Captain John is 'most crazy."

"But where is Bunny?" demanded Mrs. Struthers, who was more interested in the boy than in the boats.

"Nobody has seen him," said Bob—"at least, I haven't found any one who has."

Mr. Struthers now took a hand in the matter, and soon the news that Bunny Reeves was missing added to the general confusion, and there was at once a demand that something be done immediately.

"If there's anything happened to that boy along of these here thieves," said Captain John, "there's goin' to be trouble. He's the best boy on this coast. Never did have no bother with him, and he's what you might call a good sailor for a boy."

"Yes; but how are we to find him?" Mr. Struthers insisted, anxious that something practical be done.

Capt. Sam Bartlett, of the *Seahorse*, a cat-boat nearly as large as the *Olympia*, seemed to be the coolest of the professional boatmen, and he suggested that, as the thieves couldn't take the boats away by land, they must be somewhere in the bay.

"They just naturally can't go by land," he ended; and no one contradicted him, although Captain John bewailed the cunning of the pirates in making off with the fastest boat in the harbor; at which Captain Sam remarked, "The *Seahorse* can sail rings around the *Olymp*, and has done it." Which wasn't strictly true, as Captain John immediately pointed out.

It was decided, therefore, that a search should begin at once, and, in spite of much talk, there was no time wasted in the preparation. Very shortly a good-sized fleet of little vessels put out from the dock in pursuit of the missing boats, and the missing boy as well, for it was the general belief that the latter

was in some way involved in the disappearance of the property.

"Like as not he's just follerin' 'em," said Capt. John Clark. "He'd have the nerve, all right. He's been down here and seen 'em goin' off, and, not bein' able to do anything alone, and not havin' no one to help him, we bein' up at the hotel, he just naturally goes off after 'em. He's a good boy, that Bunny feller!"

And that was the way most people felt about it, and there was considerable anxiety for fear something had happened to the boy, although the fact that his sail-boat was gone helped to confirm the impression that he was all right.

"You see," explained Captain Sam, "if he'd come down here and surprised those fellers, likely as not they'd 'a' captured him. On the other hand, they wouldn't have taken the *Beth*. She's too small to make it worth while, and, besides, they don't mean to take the sail-boats. They're just usin' the big ones to tow the little craft. They couldn't dispose of the *Olymp*, fer instance, without paintin' her over and probably reriggin' her; but the little things they can hide in the bushes, and sell 'em when they've got a mind to. It ain't the first time this kind of thing has been done."

This was a fairly reasonable argument, and Mrs. Struthers took what comfort she could from it; but when Bob pleaded to go with the searching-party, she refused her permission emphatically.

"Do you want me to worry about both my boys?" she asked. "Indeed, you must not go. I am anxious enough as it is."

So Bob was forced to sit on the dock and watch the little fleet sail off without him.

"Do you think anything very dreadful can have happened to Bunny?" he asked his father.

"No, I don't," replied Mr. Struthers; "but, of course, we can't tell, and, if it is true that he is following the thieves, it may be some time before they find him, especially if they have gone down the bay. Do you know whether he had any food aboard the *Beth?*"

"I am sure he hadn't," answered Bob.

"Nor water?" asked his father.

"Why no, dad," Bob explained. "We never keep things like that. We always take our lunch when we go off for the day. Besides, the lockers on the *Beth* are so small, and they're mostly full of old sails and ropes and things. I'm sure Bunny hasn't anything to eat on the *Beth.*"

Meanwhile Capt. Sam Bartlett had taken command of the fleet, and strict silence was enjoined upon all, so that if they came up with the pirates they might be able to surprise them.

Captain John laughed at this idea, saying, with truth, that if all these boats appeared at this time of night it wouldn't make much difference whether there was any sound or not, for the pirates would see them and know at once why they were there.

Nevertheless, the little fleet moved along in comparative quiet, for, now that the excitement of discovery was over, there was a natural reaction, and every one was thinking of what they might find, and there was little inclination to talk. Now and then Captain John, who was aboard the *Seahorse* with Captain Sam, growled over the slow progress of the latter's vessel, and Captain Sam retorted in kind. This rivalry between the two old fellows was a yearly amusement of the cottagers, and there was a suspicion abroad that the two captains kept up this bickering for the sole entertainment of the summer visitors. It was rumored, too, that after the people had returned to the city the two were the very best of friends, and used to laugh over their squabbling. Whether it was true or not makes little difference, after all. They were both excellent sailors, and the patronage of the summer colony was fairly equally divided between them.

It was just about midnight when the fleet arrived off the mouth of the river and separated, half of the party going on down the bay, while the others trimmed their sheets for a beat up the river against the west wind. Among these latter was Captain Sam in the *Seahorse*, who for once agreed with Captain John that it was more than likely the thieves had gone in that direction in order to hide the small boats in the bushes that bordered the many creeks and swampy places higher up.

After sailing a mile or so Captain Sam discovered

a number of black objects drifting in the water ahead of them, and these, upon investigation, proved to be the missing rowboats and canoes, all tied together in two long lines.

This seemed to upset previous theories. The two captains had expected that the sail-boats would be found first, and that they might or might not see the smaller craft again.

"Well, it shows one thing, anyway," declared Captain John: "these fellers have turned these here loose somewhere up the river, 'cause they've naturally been driftin' down with this westerly breeze. It's just a question how far up they are. I'm for goin' right on."

This argument was absolutely correct. The boats were clear evidence that the pirates had gone up the river.

"We'll go on a way and see," said Captain Sam, grimly, and steered his boat accordingly.

Captain John stood forward, peering up the river as far as he could in the fast waning light of the moon. Once or twice he fancied he caught sight of a sail in the distance, but he was too far away to be certain.

Presently, however, he saw two sails close together near the south shore. This time there could be no doubt about it.

"Come about, Sam! come about!" he called, in a hoarse whisper. "They're over there off the sand-spit. I see 'em plain."

He had run back aft, and with a hand on the tiller helped to bring the *Seahorse* about as he pointed out the dim sails to his brother captain.

"It's the *Olymp*," he whispered. "I could tell her if she was miles farther off; but I don't make out the other one—it ain't no sloop."

As they gathered headway on the other tack and approached the opposite side of the river, the two boats became clearer to their view.

"What are they doin'?" asked Captain Sam, in a much perplexed voice. "Looks like they was playin' that fool water-tag game."

"By gum!" Captain John almost shouted, "that's what they is doin'. The fellers in the *Olymp* is chasin' the other one. And, say, it's the little *Beth!* They're after that Bunny feller, and—and they're going to sink him!"

There was no whispering now. As Captain John saw the big *Olympia* bearing down on the smaller boat, he sprang to the bow and let out a mighty shout. There were no words to it. It was just a big sound, but it served its purpose.

X

ROUGHING IT

THE situation in which Bunny found himself when he had succeeded in running the sloop aground was one to try the courage of any one, man or boy. True, he had escaped one peril, but in doing so he had run into another that threatened to overwhelm him. The advantage he had over the sloop, due to his ability to dodge, was wanting in the present instance. Of course, the *Olympia* was a much larger vessel, and therefore took longer in stays than the *Beth;* nevertheless, her cat-rig enabled her to come about almost as quickly, and, moreover, she could point much closer to the wind than Bunny's boat. Again, it was not a question of just touching, such as made the game of water-tag so amusing. The *Olympia*, or, rather, the men on her, were intent not only to touch but to actually run down and sink the smaller craft. The big, burly figure in the stern of the *Olympia* looked as if he might be capable of doing anything desperate under the circumstances, and, from what Bunny had heard him say, he knew that his chances were very slim if the *Olympia* forced him into a bad position. Not that

he feared for his life. Bunny hadn't even thought of that. But if his boat was wrecked he couldn't follow these pirates, and they would make off with their booty.

The thieves, on the other hand, were fairly desperate. It seemed a joke at first that four big men could not get rid of a boy in a little cat-boat; but, as Bunny held to his purpose, it became evident that something must be done to rid them of their pursuer, or else, in all likelihood, they would go to jail. These were the motives that prompted the men on the *Olympia*, and their intention was quite apparent to Bunny.

After crossing the sand-spit the boy found himself in a small cove about fifty yards from the shore, running free, and steered for the mouth of the river. The *Olympia*, seeing his intention with the sloop, had set a course that would clear the point and head off the *Beth* after she had passed over. Therefore, Bunny was hemmed in, and saw at once that it would be useless to try to get back into the middle of the river again as he was then sailing.

To go about was the only thing he could do. He had to make a tack to port or else run ashore, and to do this meant that he would head directly for the fast-approaching *Olympia*. If he kept to his present course he knew he would be run down and sunk within the next five minutes.

"I'll show you what it means not to mind your own business," the gruff voice called from the

Olympia. "I'll learn you to interfere with other people's affairs! I hope you can swim, fer we ain't got time to pick you up—mind that!"

Bunny, for reply, came about and headed for the *Olympia.* As quick as a flash the other trimmed his sheet, and for an instant the two vessels were pointed directly at each other, with no more than fifty yards between them. In the present situation the *Olympia* must run the other down, and, even though Bunny might swerve the *Beth* at the last moment and so escape being wrecked, he couldn't avoid coming into contact with the larger boat.

"Get forward there, you, John!" called the gruff voice. "Grab the bow if we don't smash him up."

Again Bunny eased his sheet and ran before the wind. He was nearer the *Olympia,* which was outsailing him of course, but he had gained some distance from the shore by the manœuvre. He began to realize, however, that it was only a question of time when the *Olympia* would run him down or else force him ashore. This latter alternative Bunny wished very much to avoid. It meant giving up and losing—in fact, failing in what he had set out to accomplish.

Rapidly the *Olympia* came up to him, and Bunny was at his wit's end. Only one satisfaction he had. If they kept this course the *Olympia* might crowd him, but he could manage to steer the *Beth* so that she wouldn't be stove in. All the *Olympia* could do was to draw up alongside and keep forcing him tow-

ard the shore, but they were not sailing so much faster than he that the impact would disable him. In that contingency, however, one of the men could board him, and Bunny knew he was no match for a grown man who was desperate. Still, there was nothing else he could do, unless he deliberately went ashore and so admitted himself beaten.

"You'd better quit, young feller, and have done with it!" shouted the gruff voice, close to him now. "We don't want to hurt you, but we aren't in this for the fun of the thing. Come on, now; give it up!"

Bunny realized that the man was really pleading with him. This was precious time these pirates were wasting, and he could appreciate that they were very anxious to be out of sight with their booty before the sun rose and search for them commenced. He knew well that nothing would suit their plans better than to be rid of him, so that they might give all their attention to disposing of the small boats.

But Bunny had no intention of giving up. He kept his course true, hoping that by delaying the final action he might make the robbers too late, and that they would either have to abandon the boats or be taken. He knew that the Blue Point men would be early on the scene in the morning—as soon as it was daylight, in fact; and he was sure that when Captain John found that the *Olympia* was gone he would institute a thorough search. So Bunny kept on, gritting his teeth and wondering how soon he would be boarded, and what would happen then.

He tried to think of something he could do to make the *Beth* go faster, but there was nothing. His sail wasn't half the size of the *Olympia's*, and it was only a question of minutes now when something serious must occur.

On came the *Olympia*, and Bunny could see her bow over his shoulder. It seemed only a matter of seconds, and the race—a grim race, this one—would be over. Bunny had need of all his nerve.

It was then, however, that the men sailing the *Olympia* did a foolish thing. One of them, who was forward, called back:

"Blanket him, Mike, and run him down!"

This meant that the *Olympia* would steer directly behind the *Beth*, and with her larger sail cut off the wind from the smaller vessel. Bunny heard, of course, and looked back to see if the suggestion would be followed. This was tag in earnest, and he knew what to do in case this plan was carried out.

At once he saw the bow of the *Olympia* turn in to follow his path, and his heart gave a leap of joy. They couldn't have done a more foolish thing, for Bunny, after an instant's delay, giving them enough time to be fairly set on their course, suddenly hauled in his sheet, put his tiller hard down, and, crossing the bows of the other boat, made for the centre of the river on a beam wind.

The *Olympia* followed, of course, but now there was more room for Bunny to handle his little boat; and although he knew that ultimately he would be

captured, it would take just so much longer to force him into a similar position, and every minute the pirates wasted was so much gained.

From the growling behind him he knew that his pursuers were more than angry. The fellow who had made the suggestion to blanket Bunny was told forcibly what kind of a fool he was, and he retorted that the other didn't have to do it if he didn't want to.

This was fine, and pleased Bunny hugely, who, now that he was comparatively free, almost smiled at the fun he was having. All the same the strain was telling, and he felt tired. He put his back to the tiller and cleated his sheet, to give his arms a rest; but his legs ached, now that he had time to think about it, and he began to have a very gone and empty feeling inside. Then, as if he wasn't bothered enough, he suddenly found that he was very thirsty, and would have given anything for a drink of water.

"Gee!" he said to himself, "it's queer how everything strikes a fellow all at once!" And then he pulled up his belt another notch and looked back at the *Olympia* speeding after him.

It was probably an hour longer before the *Olympia* again forced the *Beth* into the tight place their own stupidity had permitted him to escape from. Back and forth across the river, tacking or running free, twisting and turning as he would, Bunny was outsailed and outpointed, and again found himself near the sand-spit, with no alternative but to keep a

straight course before the wind with the *Olympia* following and wait till he was boarded. Then — well, Bunny didn't know what would happen then.

"You won't get off so easy this time," the gruff voice of Mike called, almost in his ear. "We've got you all right, and we'll make you sorry you ever started out on this game."

There was no mistaking the anger in the tone. The men were mad through and through, and did not mean to let the boy escape a second time.

"I'll catch yer," Mike went on, "if I stay here all night! But I won't have to—mind that!"

The bows of the *Olympia* were even with the stern of the *Beth* now, and only a few yards to port. A few minutes later it was only a yard, and Bunny was almost dazed with the sound of the rushing water between them, the singing of the wind in the rigging, and the excitement of it all. He nerved himself for the shock of the two boats meeting and for the struggle that was sure to follow. He had no plan. There was nothing, apparently, he could do.

"You jump aboard the minute she touches!" growled Mike to the other man. "We'll take the kid with us and let his boat go."

An instant later the shock of the two vessels coming together staggered the boy in the stern, and he saw the burly form of John leap aboard the *Beth*. The little vessel heeled to the added weight, and for a moment the man paused to regain his balance. Then he stepped into the cockpit from the bow and

made for the boy. Almost without thinking, Bunny pulled out the tiller and raised it above his head, ready to strike one blow, at any rate. His teeth were set and his face pale, but he didn't mean to give up without a struggle. The man stopped, scarcely outside of striking distance.

"Put down the stick!" he said, roughly. "Put it down, or it will be the worse for you if you don't!" But Bunny held his ground.

"Go on and get him!" commanded Mike, on the *Olympia*. "What's the matter with you? Are you afraid of a kid with a tiller in his hand?"

The man came with a rush, throwing up his hands to ward his head from the expected blow, and the boy struck with all his might. With a howl of pain the other grappled him, and Bunny felt himself borne back against the tiller-head.

At that moment, while Bunny still struggled helplessly, a long shout sounded across the water. He noted the arms clutching him relax, and the body bearing him down straighten. Then he looked out across the water and saw the *Seahorse* making for them with all speed.

XI

BUNNY SCORES

THERE was no doubt about the menace in that shout from Captain John aboard the *Seahorse*. He recognized his own vessel, and all the indignation he felt at having her stolen burst forth in a yell of triumph and rage. Moreover, his keen old eyes had seen something of the struggle going on in the smaller vessel, and he had made a shrewd guess at what it was all about.

The effect upon the pirates was immediate. Bunny's assailant at once abandoned him and started forward to join Mike on the *Olympia;* but that worthy, evidently too scared to think of anything except his own safety, had trimmed his sheet and was making for the beach with all speed, leaving his accomplice behind on the *Beth.* With an oath the man looked about him helplessly, and then, with a final glance at the on-rushing *Seahorse*, jumped into the river, and swam toward the shore.

Bunny kept his wits, and, shipping his tiller, hurriedly trimmed his sheet and started in pursuit; but it took some time to get any headway, and he lost sight of the swimming man in the dark shadows

of the trees on shore. He steered then for the *Olympia*, but before he came up with her the flapping sail showed that she had been abandoned; the robbers were either ashore or very near it, and it was useless to follow, as far as he was concerned.

He went alongside the *Olympia*, therefore, and waited the arrival of the *Seahorse*.

In a moment or two he was hailed by Captain John.

"Hey, there, you Bunny feller, have you got 'em?" he cried, as they came up into the wind beside the *Beth*.

"No, I haven't," answered Bunny, ruefully. "They swam for it."

"Where's the sloop?" asked Captain Sam.

"She's hard aground on the sand-spit," Bunny answered. "Did you pick up the small boats?"

"Yes, we've got 'em," said Captain Sam; and by this time Captain John was aboard his own vessel.

"By jimminy," they heard him call, "I've got yacht fixin's aboard here to fit out John Rockyfeller's *Lucertania*. Say, she's all right, though. Can't see they've hurt her none."

Once satisfied that his beloved boat was unhurt, Captain John began to ply Bunny with questions, and soon the whole story was told, to the great admiration of all. They discussed what they had better do, and all agreed that it would be useless to go ashore with a hope of finding the pirates, and concluded that the best thing was to get the sloop off and hurry back to Blue Point with all speed.

"Say," began Captain John, suddenly, in the midst of a heated discussion as to the best method of floating the sloop—"say, you Bunny feller, have you had anything to eat?"

"No, I haven't, and I'm 'most starved," Bunny answered.

"I'll bet you are," agreed the Captain; and soon they found some hard crackers and a jug of water for the boy, who, munching them, thought they were the best things he had ever tasted.

"Guess you're pretty tired, too, ain't you?" Captain John pursued.

"Yes, pretty tired," Bunny confessed.

"Well, you come aboard the *Olymp*, and leave one of these here fellers to sail your vessel home. Then we'll get up to the dock. What do you say, Sam? Guess the folks is some worried, hey?"

Captain Sam agreed that it was just as well that word should be sent back that everything was all right, and he "calculated" that the Strutherses would be "kind o' glad to see Bunny," and that he could take care of the sloop. So the *Olympia*, with Bunny and Captain John aboard, slipped off from the scene of the rescue and headed for Blue Point.

The old boatman insisted that Bunny tell the story all over again, and, although he was very sleepy and tired and would rather have curled down on the cushion in the cabin, he went through it once more, answering the Captain's questions and explaining everything as well as he could.

"And you say you can't tell what they looked like?" the Captain asked, for the fiftieth time.

"It was too dark to see their faces," Bunny explained.

"Not even the feller that boarded you?" insisted the Captain.

"No, not even him," Bunny affirmed. "You see, he wasn't there long, and I wasn't really thinking what he looked like. Besides, when he got near he had his arms over his face."

"Did you hit him hard?" chuckled the Captain.

"I tried."

"Did he make a noise like he was hurt?"

"Yes, I think he did," said Bunny.

"Well, that's somethin', anyways. But we won't catch 'em. There ain't no use lookin'. I suspect they've come from down Barnegat way most likely. There's some queer fellers there."

Presently Captain John saw how tired Bunny was, and sent him off to the cabin for a nap.

"I'll wake you up when we get in," he promised; and Bunny, glad of the chance, was soon fast asleep.

It seemed only a moment thereafter that Bunny became dimly conscious of voices — many voices, talking loudly—and as he awoke he heard the sturdy tones of Captain John.

"Well, as I was sayin', fer nerve, downright nerve *and* sand, that Bunny feller's got it to give away. There he was, just a kid, and stickin' to them fellers, and I guess they was some sore. Him in that little

Beth, that ain't got ribs in her thicker than a match, and skippin' out of the way of the *Olymp*, that would 'a' smashed her to kindlin's! As I was sayin', fer plain, old-fashioned grit *and* sand, that Bunny feller's got all the kids beat I ever see."

Then Bunny heard the voice of Mrs. Struthers, and he jumped to his feet guiltily.

"Oh, Captain John, is my boy there?"

"Yes'm, here, safe and sound, and, as I was sayin', fer up-to-date sand *and* grit—"

But Bunny was out of the cabin and up the steps to meet Mrs. Struthers, who had insisted upon waiting for him, and gave a little exclamation of delight as she took him in her arms.

"Oh, Bunny," she cried, "I don't care what you've done, so that you're back again all safe! We've been worried so about you!"

"I'm sorry—" Bunny began. But Captain John, who had followed, cut in sharply:

"Ain't no cause to be sorry, as I see. Ain't you saved all this little truck for the summer boarders, besides the *Olymp?* As I was sayin'—"

"Oh, Bunny, tell us all about it!" Bob interrupted.

"I think we'd better go home to bed," said Mr. Struthers, most sensibly. "Bunny must be tired out."

"Of course he's tired," said Mrs. Struthers. "We'll go at once."

But before they could get away there were a great number of people who wanted to shake Bunny's

hand and thank him for having saved their boats, and, of course, many questions were asked about the night's adventures, so that it was almost daylight when Mrs. Struthers started for the cottage with "her boys."

As they walked off the pier they could hear Captain John's high voice above the others.

"As I was sayin', fer old-fashioned, up-to-date nerve *and* sand, that Bunny feller's got any kid—or man, fer that matter—beat a mile!" And old Captain John meant what he said.

XII

TIME OUT

BREAKFAST was late at the Struthers cottage the next day. As a matter of fact, there wasn't much difference between breakfast and luncheon, and no two of the family arrived down-stairs at the same time. Bunny and Bob, who roomed together in the top of the house, roused about nine o'clock, talked over the night's events, and then promptly went to sleep again, to wake up later very hungry and ready for whatever Mrs. Struthers might call the meal. That good lady wanted to hear the story of the pirates all over again, and there was little else talked of that day, or for several days thereafter. Everybody in the little colony had a word of praise or thanks for Bunny, and some boys might have become very vain over it all. But Bunny wasn't given to taking his own exploits seriously, and thought, as he said again and again, "I don't see what else I could have done."

And so, being modest as well as brave, added greatly to Bunny's popularity. People liked him all the more because he didn't seem to be any different after his adventures than before, and were

pleased to find that the admiration they showered on him hadn't "spoiled him," as they put it.

Not that Bunny wasn't pleased that every one seemed to like him and to think that he had been brave for a boy. Of course he liked it, but he was just the same as other boys who do things because they must be done, and not with any idea of what is going to be said about it afterward.

Bunny had one regret, however. He wished, naturally enough, that his father had been there, for he had a strong desire to please him, and if, as every one said, "he had nerve," he would have liked his father to know it. It was the quality every man or boy should possess, so Mr. Reeves had insisted, and (although Bunny knew it was a mistake in this instance) he had attributed the loss of the canoe-race to a lack of this essential in his son.

But what was nerve? Bunny was puzzled, and although he thought about it almost constantly, he didn't come to a very satisfactory conclusion about it for some time.

None of this praise for Bunny caused any envy in the hearts of his best friends, Bob Struthers and Ted Halliday. They talked it over and over till Bunny grew tired of answering questions.

"Oh, forget it!" he answered one day, when they renewed the subject in the midst of kicking the football.

"But I want to know," persisted Ted. "When that fellow came aboard the *Beth*, weren't you afraid he'd hurt you?"

"No, I wasn't," said Bunny; "that is, I didn't bother about it. The man was there, and that's all there was to it. I didn't have time to wonder whether I was afraid or not."

"But you were glad to see the *Seahorse*, weren't you?" demanded Ted.

"Sure I was," answered Bunny. "I didn't think I was having the time of my life out there, and, what's more, I was hungry."

"Well, I'd have been scared," Bob confessed, candidly.

"No, you wouldn't," said Bunny, positively, "you'd have done just the same thing I did. A fellow hasn't time to get scared."

"I wish I'd been with you," said Ted, heartily. "It was mighty nervy of you, Bunny."

"What is nerve?" questioned Bunny, and the others looked at him to see if he were in earnest.

"Why, you know," Bob answered, seeing how serious he was.

"I don't think I do," returned Bunny. "It isn't just not being afraid of things, because you have it when there isn't any chance of being hurt."

"How do you mean?" asked Bob.

"Well, when you're running a quarter mile," Bunny went on, "you get tired in the last hundred yards, and it takes a lot of nerve to finish sometimes; but you aren't afraid of anything, and there isn't any danger of your being hurt."

"That's so," Bob agreed, for he had run many a race like that, and knew.

"Besides, you can have nerve and be scared of things, too," Bunny continued. "I'm always afraid when I'm up in high buildings, and I just hate elevators."

"Seeing people injured is what gets me," Bob put in.

"Say, Bunny," began Ted, who had been silent during this conversation, "you do go up in elevators, don't you?"

"Sure, but I don't like it," Bunny replied.

"Well, that's nerve!" Ted announced.

"Oh, pshaw!" Bunny retorted, sceptically. "I just try not to think about myself if I have to go up in one of the beastly things."

"All the same, that's what nerve is," Ted insisted. "It's forgetting about yourself and not wondering whether you're afraid when you go after pirates, or thinking how tired you are when you finish a quarter-mile race, like Bob here. It's plugging away and doing the best you can, no matter how you feel about it. That's what nerve is, all right."

And after discussing the matter further, Bunny and Bob agreed that perhaps Ted was correct.

As the end of the summer approached, both Ted Halliday and Bunny became more and more serious over the coming football season. They didn't know exactly how they ought to feel toward each other, because the traditions of each school demanded that

they should be enemies, and ascribe certain attributes to the other that each boy found wanting in his summer friend. Bob and Bunny talked it over often, and neither of them could come to any other conclusion than that Ted Halliday was one of the nicest fellows they had ever known, even if he did go to the Academy.

"And I tell you what it is, Bob," Bunny declared, "there are a number of fellows at Clinton that I don't think are nearly as decent as Ted. Of course, I wouldn't say that at the school, but it's a fact, all the same."

"I know what you mean," Bob answered, "and I think so, too, but it would never do to say so; and, anyway, Bunny, I don't believe all the fellows at the Academy are like Ted. He's more like a Clinton fellow. I wish he had gone there instead of to the old Academy."

"Yes, so do I," agreed Bunny. "He would have helped the team a lot. Instead of that, he'll be doing all he can to beat us."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of that," said Bob, who had unbounded confidence in Bunny and anything he had to do with.

"I'm by no means sure," Bunny returned, feelingly. "We're going to have a hard time to win this year. I know that now, and you can count on Ted's having a good team, sure!"

Ted Halliday felt much the same way that Bunny and Bob did, but he couldn't, of course, talk to them

about it. He liked both the boys very much indeed, and wondered now and then if all the things they said at the Academy about Clinton were true. He thought about it a good deal, and grew more and more sorry that the summer was at an end.

The last week at the seashore was given up to preparation for departure. Boats and canoes had to be made ready for the winter, and that took a good deal of time. Then, too, Mrs. Struthers had work for the boys to do about the cottage, and before they realized it the time came when they must separate.

Bunny left before the rest — principally because he wanted to be back at school and have everything ready before the football boys came in, and partly because Mrs. Struthers wanted Bob at home for a few days before she sent him off to Clinton.

Bunny tried to thank Mrs. Struthers for being so good to him, though all he could say was, "I've had such a fine time, Mrs. Struthers!" But she understood, and said she was glad she knew him now, and that he must not forget that he was one of her boys.

The three made plans for the next summer, when they hoped to be together again, and at the end Mrs. Struthers put her arms about Bunny and kissed him before everybody—at which he couldn't help blushing a little, but liked it all the same.

Ted Halliday went down to the station with the others to see Bunny off, and, while they were waiting, tried to think how he could express the things

he wanted to tell Bunny. And Bunny was feeling much the same way, so that when Ted held out his hand both were somewhat embarrassed.

"We've had a mighty good time together," Ted began.

"We certainly have," Bunny answered, quite as much upset as Ted.

"Well, I was thinking we'd see each other once during the football season, and — and though of course I want to beat Clinton, I hope you will win all your other games."

"Thanks," said Bunny. "I wish you were coming to Clinton."

"I've been wishing you were going to the Academy," Ted replied; and then they both laughed, which relieved the situation at once.

"I don't see," Bunny went on, "why we can't be friends, even if we are against each other in football?"

"Neither do I," answered Ted, heartily.

"What are you fellows talking about?" asked Bob, coming up.

"We've just decided we are going to be friends even if we are at different schools," Bunny explained.

"Well, I want to be in on that, too!" exclaimed Bob; and then and there the three pledged themselves to be friends, no matter what happened or where they were, and all three shook hands on it.

Five minutes later Bunny waved good-bye out of the car window, and was soon speeding on his way back to school.

XIII

THE LINE-UP

THE summer had been a glorious one, but for all that Bunny was not sorry to be at school again. He took his duties as captain of the football team quite seriously, and he wanted to be at work. The material was uncertain; some of the boys he knew would not be back, and he was anxious to find out if any new scholars were expected upon whom he might count to help the team. Then, too, he felt that the Academy eleven was likely to be strong; not that he had any particular information on the subject, but because his friendship with Ted Halliday had given him considerable respect for that young man's ability in all directions, and he knew, moreover, that Ted wouldn't leave anything to chance that might help to win. Also he wanted to be at the game again, for he liked it better than anything else he did, and was happy in the work it entailed.

It might have been more polite if he had gone directly to see Doctor MacHenry, but he didn't. As soon as he had arranged for his trunk to be taken to his rooms, he made for the gymnasium to see Billy Bryan, the trainer.

"So you're back?" said that individual, shaking the boy's hand. "I'm glad to see you."

"And I'm glad to be here, Billy," said Bunny. "How is everything?"

"Just the same," replied Billy. "I'm starting to get things in shape for the season. Come over here and let me show you what I got the doctor to put in for me."

Billy led the way to one corner of the dressing-rooms, and, with a great deal of pride, exhibited a wooden box about four feet high.

"That 'll take the bruises out of you," he said. And then, noting Bunny's look of wonder, he explained further: "You see, it's a steam-box. We've been wanting one for years. I'll just put one of you boys in there and give you a good sweating, and you'll be better than ever. Takes the bumps out of you in no time. Finest thing in the business for sprains and such-like. Ought to have had one long ago."

Bunny expressed his delight with as much enthusiasm as he could muster, though, to tell the truth, he wasn't particularly interested. Billy was always wanting something he didn't have; that was his failing. But it didn't in any way keep him from taking excellent care of his boys, and there was never any work too hard for him to do for them.

Most people who didn't know Billy very well thought that he was a cross, cranky old man, because he seemed to take life so seriously, and, except upon

rare occasions, never smiled. Nevertheless, the boys thought the world of him, and he deserved it. He had seen many generations of Clinton boys come and go, and there were a number of men who never forgot the old trainer, and would regularly send him a reminder of their existence.

Billy wasn't foolish, and he hadn't any fads; but he was an autocrat. When he said a thing was to be done, woe to the boy who disobeyed. He had no authority, although he might have gone to Doctor MacHenry if he chose, but he never did. Instead he would simply ignore the offender, and, as all the boys knew that what Billy told them to do was for their own and the teams' good, they always sided with him. This "absent treatment," as the boys called it, usually had its effect promptly, and the one in disgrace very soon made his peace with Billy. And this was easy, for all that was necessary was to tell the old trainer that he was ready to do what he was told, and that ended the matter. Billy never referred to it again, and treated the youngster thereafter as if nothing had happened.

"What do you think of the new football rules, Billy?" Bunny asked, after he had inspected the steam-box inside and out.

"I wish they'd stop tinkering with them," was the prompt reply. "If they want to make it less dangerous, why don't they ask some of us who are putting the men in shape to stand the strain? What do coaches and newspaper men know about training

athletes?—and let me tell you, my boy, the training is what counts!"

"But they have made it less dangerous, insisted Bunny.

"Maybe, maybe," muttered Billy, with a dubious shake of his head; "but what they ought to do at once is to have another set of rules for boys. It isn't right that youngsters should be playing a game that's hard enough on grown men in the finest condition."

"Oh, nobody wants that, Billy," Bunny protested. "Why, we are only getting ready for college when we play at school, and we would have to learn the game all over again."

"It needn't be changed as much as that. But what's the use of our talking? Have you seen the doctor?"

"Not yet," replied Bunny. "I was going right away after I had seen you."

"Then off you go now," said Billy, positively. "You should have gone there first. It's not showing the proper respect, and—well, he's not looking as I'd like to see him. The doctor is getting to be an old man, Bunny, and he's the best friend you boys have about here."

"He isn't sick, is he?" Bunny asked, in some alarm, for he was very fond of the doctor, although he was always a little in awe of him.

"I'm not saying that," Billy went on; "he is just getting on in years, like some others of us. Go and

see him, and then you can come back and tell me what you've been doing all summer. You look pretty hearty yourself."

Bunny went off at once, and the doctor welcomed him cordially. To Bunny he seemed the same, but to older eyes he was a trifle worn. He looked tired and gray, but his voice was just as strong and just as kindly as ever.

"Well, my boy, I'm glad to see you. You look as if the seashore had done you good," was his greeting.

"Billy said you weren't so well, sir," Bunny replied.

"Oh, Billy!" exclaimed the doctor, smiling. "Don't pay any attention to him. He's been having me install some sort of a steam-box for you boys, and wants to put me in it. Says it will make me twenty years younger. I told him to get into it himself. Thought he needed it more than I did. I'm all right, and ready for the coming year."

"Are there any new boys for the team, sir?" asked Bunny, anxiously.

"Yes, I think there are three or four that will perhaps help you," answered the doctor. "Of course, I'm not an expert on what constitutes a good football player, but they look pretty sizable young men, and ought to make something for you. Two of them inform me that they have played before."

"What are *their* names, sir?" asked Bunny. "I'd like to keep a lookout for them when they come."

"Walters and Thornton," replied the doctor. "But, tell me, have you seen your father?"

"Yes, he came down to Blue Point one afternoon," Bunny replied.

"Did you have a nice time together?" the doctor asked.

"Well, sir, he was there so little, and—and I don't think we had a really nice time." The boy hesitated and showed his embarrassment.

"Come," said the doctor, "out with it! What was the matter?"

"Oh, it wasn't anything in particular," answered Bunny. "He stayed just long enough to see Bob Struthers beat me in a canoe-race, and then he went away."

"Humph!" grunted the doctor. "Well, what did he have to say?"

"He told me I should have won the race, but that I didn't have the nerve to finish. That I gave up, and—and—"

"And did you?" demanded the doctor.

"No, sir, I didn't," Bunny answered. "You see, I wanted Bob to win because — well, because his mother had been awfully good to me, and I didn't care; so I let him win, though I did pretend I was trying as hard as I could."

"Why didn't you tell your father that?" said the doctor.

"Because," Bunny answered, "he seemed so sure of what he was saying that I thought if I told him

what I'd done he would think it was just an excuse. And besides, sir, it's such an easy thing to say after you've been beaten that way. He might have thought—oh, he might have thought anything."

"Perhaps you were right, my boy; it was better not to say anything about it. But I'm sorry your father has received a wrong impression."

"Yes, so am I," answered Bunny. "He seems to think having nerve is everything."

"I'm not sure but that nerve has a good deal to do with most things, only you will learn as you grow older that there are several kinds of nerve."

"Yes, sir, I suppose there are," Bunny agreed. And presently, after another hearty hand-shake, he went back to the gymnasium.

That first week passed quickly, and before Bunny knew it the school year had begun, and the campus was filled with boys old and new.

Bob came back, much pleased to find that Bunny had fixed up their rooms in Barton Hall, and that all he had to do was to put his clothes away and make himself at home.

"What are the prospects for the team?" he asked, almost as soon as he had arrived.

"I can't tell yet," Bunny answered. "The doctor says that there are two, anyway, that he thinks will do. Walters and Thornton are their names."

"Big chaps?" asked Bob.

"I haven't seen them yet," Bunny replied.

"I came up in the train with two fellows," Bob

went on, "who were pretty big, but I didn't think much of them. They spent most of their time in the smoking-car."

"There are a lot of fellows think they're big when they smoke," Bunny said. "They'll stop it when Billy gets after them. Say, how is your mother?"

"Fine!" answered Bob. "Sent her love to you, and I've got a box of stuff to eat in my trunk."

"Good!" returned Bunny. "Makes me hungry just to think of it."

"How's Billy?" asked Bob.

"Oh, he's just the same," Bunny replied. "He's got a new-fangled steam-box, and he wants the old doctor to get in it. Think of it! Says he'll make another man of him. He's just the same old Billy."

"Heard anything of Hargrave?"

"Yes; he's written, saying he can't get down till some time in October. Tells me I'm to make the fellows fall on the ball and run down on punts, and to let Billy have his own way till he comes. I'm sorry he can't get here sooner. He's a fine man, Hargrave."

"Yes, I suppose he is," agreed Bob, "though I must say I never liked him as much as you did."

"That's because you don't know him," Bunny maintained.

"I'm not going to argue about it," Bob replied, discreetly. "There's no use in that—only I don't like him."

"There are a lot of fellows say that," retorted

Bunny, a little nettled at Bob's tone. "All the same, he's square, and he's a good coach."

"Don't get huffy about it," Bob protested. "I'm willing to admit anything you say, only you can't expect me to like him if I don't."

"You're prejudiced!" Bunny grumbled. It had always annoyed him that Bob couldn't see what a really fine man Hargrave was.

"Of course, I stick to you, outside," Bob answered; "but I can't help thinking there is some reason for being dissatisfied with the way Hargrave has been coaching. We have lost to Academy for two years in succession."

"I expect there will be some kicking," Bunny agreed. "Wallace and Crawford never did like him. I guess I'm going to have my own troubles all right before the season is over. There's more than just glory in being captain of a football team."

XIV

PRELIMINARY PRACTICE

WALTERS and Thornton, the two new scholars in whom Bunny had a particular interest on account of their size and weight, were not quite like the rest of Clinton boys. They had never attended a boarding-school before, and, being older than any of their associates, had rather queer notions of their own importance.

Walters had been spoiled by having too much money and indulgence generally. He was used to doing exactly as he pleased at home, where he had been tutored most of his life, and had only come to Clinton for a year before he went to college.

Thornton hailed from the same little town, and, being a year younger than Walters, was entirely under the influence of his friend—so much so, in fact, that he never had any opinion of his own on any subject.

However, both of them were heavily built for their age, and, knowing that they would help to stiffen the line, Bunny was most anxious to get them out.

"I want to know if you two fellows won't try for the football team?" he said one day as he met them on the campus.

"Well, I don't know," began Walters, in a very superior way, "whether it's worth my while to play or not."

"Neither do I," said Thornton, promptly.

"We need big men," Bunny went on, pleasantly, hoping to make a favorable impression. "Of course, everybody does what they can for the honor of the school, you know, and we're going to have a hard time to beat the Academy this year, anyway."

"I don't care about the school," Walters said, rather disagreeably. "You see, I'm only here for this year, and then I'm going to college. Besides, I don't see what difference it makes with a prep. school whether you win or lose. Nobody cares."

"Neither do I," Thornton announced.

"It makes a lot of difference to us," answered Bunny. "You'll find that all the fellows here are expected to do what they can to help the teams."

"Well, I don't care about that, but I'll think it over. What places have you open? I like to play behind the line, you know," Walters explained.

"So do I," said Thornton.

"I should have thought you were line men," Bunny returned. He was rather inclined to laugh, they were so awfully grown-up; but he wished them to come out and try for the team, and didn't want to do anything that might hurt their feelings.

"I'll think it over," Walters repeated.

"So will I," Thornton joined in.

"We have our first practice at three-thirty this

afternoon, so I'll hope to see you," Bunny said, cheerfully.

"Who are you, anyway?" asked Walters.

"Oh, I'm Reeves, the captain of the football team," said Bunny. "I thought you knew."

Both of these superior beings looked at him as if he were some sort of freak, and again Bunny was inclined to laugh, but he kept a straight face as well as he could.

"I'll think it over," Walters said, finally.

"So will I," echoed Thornton; and Bunny went off, chuckling, to tell Bob about them.

"They must be the same fellows who came up in the train with me," Bob said, when Bunny had finished describing his interview with Walters and Thornton. "They talked about automobiles, and how sorry they were they couldn't have a car at school with them. We'll take some of that out of them before they've been here long."

"Yes, but that doesn't help the football team," said Bunny, gravely, "and we need weight in the line. Somehow I don't believe we can do much with them, though I mean to try. They don't seem to care, that's the worst of it."

"Well, of course, they've only just come," said Bob. "You can't expect them to have much school spirit yet."

"No, of course not," Bunny agreed; "but you expect to see them take an interest. They act as if they were doing the school a favor, to hear them

talk about how they'll 'think it over.' And Thornton! He just says 'Me too,' like a parrot."

"I suppose they are living in the new dormitories?" said Bob.

"Sure!" answered Bunny. "Everything about them is new."

The first afternoon's football practice was interesting chiefly for the number of men who came out, not only to play but to see. The whole school adjourned in a body to the athletic field as soon as they could escape from recitations, and there was quite a crowd in the grandstand. Bunny and the old trainer made no effort to do anything very much, and were most interested in getting acquainted with the new boys who turned up and in looking over the material. A summer makes quite a difference to growing boys, and some of the youngsters who the year before had not been thought of as possibilities had returned looking twice as big as they did before.

On the other hand, there were several of last year's squad who sat in the grandstand and showed no inclination to take part — fellows who, Bunny knew, would make many excuses and would have to be teased, but who would be hard at it in a week. The superior Walters, with his satellite Thornton, sat apart and sneered.

"Catch me playing with a lot of kids like that; I'd hurt them," said Walters, scornfully.

"So would I," agreed Thornton.

"I don't believe I'm going to like this place, anyhow," Walters went on; "these chaps are all so young and goody-goody."

"That's right," said Thornton.

"And old Mac says we can't smoke. What do you think of it!" Walters continued. "I wonder if he tells every fellow that? He looked pretty sharp when he said it, too. He seemed grouchy to me."

"He certainly did," Thornton agreed; "but, I say, that's all rot — the idea of men like us not being allowed to smoke. I'd like a cigarette this minute."

"Wonder if we couldn't take a sneak and have one?" Walters suggested.

"Let us try it, anyway," replied Thornton; and the two strolled away together, while the boys in the grandstand watched them.

There was no lack of comment as they left the field, and Walters and Thornton would have been very much surprised had they heard the general verdict, which was far from complimentary.

Out on the field Bunny conferred with the old trainer.

"It doesn't look so badly, does it, Billy?" he said, cheerfully.

"I don't know," was the pessimistic answer. "I don't have any use for those fellows that have to be coaxed. It always takes a week or two before they come out, and we haven't any too much time as it is."

"I'll get after them right off," Bunny promised;

and the minute practice was over for the afternoon he started out to find Wallace and Crawford.

He met them on their way to their rooms, and immediately broached the subject.

"What's the matter with you two chumps?" he began, banteringly. "Why weren't you out to-day?"

"I'm not sure I'll have time to play this year," said Wallace. "You see, I've got a lot of Latin to make up, and—"

"Get out!" retorted Bunny. "You just want me to tell you that we can't get along without you. Well, we can't, and that's a fact. What's your trouble, Crawford?" he ended, turning to the other.

"Oh, I don't think you need us," returned Crawford, a trifle sullenly. "You seem to have all the men you want."

"Now, what's the use of talking like that?" Bunny went on, seriously. "You know as well as I do that we need you two fellows in the worst way. I met Ted Halliday, of the Academy, this summer at the seashore, and I know they're going to have a peach of a team, and we'll have to work like slaves to beat them. That's why I want everybody to get out as soon as possible; we haven't a minute to waste."

"Halliday's a mucker, isn't he?" said Wallace.

"No, he isn't, not one bit," returned Bunny, warmly. "I thought that, too, till I saw a lot of him. He's one of the nicest fellows you ever met."

"You'll have to show me," said Crawford, sceptically. "That kind doesn't grow at the Academy."

"You'll change your mind, Bunny, after the game," Wallace put in.

"No, I won't," insisted Bunny. "I tell you, we've an idea over here that the Academy isn't all right. I believe most of them are just like we are."

"I don't think the seashore agrees with you," Wallace laughed, "telling us there are nice fellows at the Academy! Let me feel your pulse."

"All the same, it's true," Bunny replied. "Anyhow, this isn't telling me you'll be out to practice to-morrow, both of you. You must come, and that's all there is to it."

"I'll have to get another pair of shoes first," said Wallace; "my old ones are no good any more."

"You can wear them till the others come," Bunny answered. "I want you both out to-morrow, shoes or no shoes."

"Is Hargrave coming back to coach?" asked Crawford.

"Sure!" exclaimed Bunny. He knew that neither of them liked Hargrave particularly, but he didn't mean to show it.

Wallace grunted. "It's a pity we can't get a good coach," he said. "I'd feel a lot more like coming out."

"Them's my sentiments," Crawford cut in. "I'd rather we didn't have any coach than Hargrave."

"Well, we won't argue about it," Bunny returned, diplomatically. "What I'm interested in is to get you fellows out. Tell me you'll be on the field to-morrow, and I'll let you go to dinner."

"All right," said Wallace, rather grudgingly.

"And you, too, Crawford?" Bunny insisted.

"I guess so," was the unenthusiastic reply.

"That's good!" exclaimed Bunny, cheerfully. "The quicker we get to work the better, and we're going to win from the Academy this year, understand that!" And he started off.

"You'll need a new coach, then," Wallace called after him, but Bunny only laughed in reply.

All the same, Bunny was far from liking this attitude toward Hargrave. Wallace, in particular, was a good football player, and his word had considerable influence in the school. He knew, also, that there had been many complaints among the boys last year because they lost the Academy game, and some said it was because Hargrave didn't know how to coach any more, while others insisted that he didn't put the best men on the team. As a matter of fact, they had been beaten two years in succession, and, as is usually the case, the blame fell on the coach. But Bunny knew something of Hargrave's difficulties in the previous years—the internal dissensions, petty jealousies, and half-hearted effort on the part of those who thought they were not being well treated. He knew that the coach had been accused of favoritism because, when they asked who would make the best captain, he had named Bunny Reeves, and didn't hesitate to show that he was pleased after the election.

Bunny hoped to avoid all discontent this autumn,

and to lead a united team through the season. He knew that it was only in this way that they could expect a victory over their Academy rivals. But these few remarks of Wallace and Crawford showed what was in their minds, and he was not very cheerful when he arrived at his rooms at Barton Hall.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Bob, when he came in.

"Oh, nothing, except I'm worried about this old football team," Bunny replied.

"What's up?" asked his room-mate.

"Wallace and Crawford," was the significant answer.

"Humph!" grunted Bob. "I guess you can always find trouble there. Aren't they coming out?"

"Oh yes, they'll be on the field to-morrow."

"Then what's the trouble?" demanded Bob.

"Nothing — yet," returned Bunny, slowly — and that was all he would say.

XV

ON THE DEFENSIVE

BY the end of the following week all the prospective players were on the field, and the outlook for the team improved daily. Wallace and Crawford kept their promises, and, more than that, were working hard. Even the superior Walters and his shadow Thornton (by this time called "Me Too" by almost every one) came out and did fairly well, considering everything. They still acted as if they were doing the school a favor, and resented it somewhat when Bunny insisted that they play in the line, but, all in all, they managed creditably enough. They had already discovered that their grown-up airs made no impression, and were less haughty in consequence. Altogether everything seemed to be going as well as possible, and Billy Bryan, highly pleased, attributed it all to the new steam-box.

"I tell you, young man," he would say to Bunny after every practice, "it makes a difference whether they feel sore or not, and that box takes it all out of them quick. That's the thing that does it, and we should have had it long ago. I'd like to get the doctor in there. It would make him twenty years younger."

But Bunny was far from satisfied. There was an undercurrent of discontent among all the boys, or at least he thought there was, although he didn't show that he realized that anything was amiss. He would find two or three of them talking together in the dressing-room, and noticed that they stopped at once when he put in an appearance. Also, there was a rather universal pessimism in regard to the final game with the Academy. A good many of the boys said openly that "they didn't have a chance," and that sort of spirit Bunny knew was fatal. But he couldn't tell where the trouble lay or who was making it, though he suspected the cause. Sometimes he said to himself that he was just nervous and was worrying about nothing, but he couldn't shake himself free of the feeling that something was wrong.

As far as the practice went, he of course was impatient. That was to be expected, for no one is ever satisfied with a football team—that is, no captain or coach; but that wasn't the thing that caused him the most anxiety.

Bob, who was ever loyal to Bunny, heard of the trouble through one of the small boys in the school, and one evening, while they were studying, spoke out.

"Say, Bunny," he began, "there's going to be some grumbling over Hargrave, I'm thinking. Little Peters said he heard Crawford and Wallace talking about it."

"What did they say?" asked Bunny, eagerly.

"The kid didn't seem very sure, except that they were going to do something to keep him from coming back."

"I'm not surprised at Crawford's trying to do that," Bunny said. "He's had it in for Hargrave ever since last year, when he wasn't given a place over Bolton. As if he was as good as Bolton! Why, it didn't take Hargrave—any one could tell that!"

"He wanted to be captain, too," remarked Bob, casually.

"No," Bunny replied, "I don't think he ever thought of being captain; but Wallace did, all right. I wish he were."

"Well, you know the way I think about Hargrave," Bob went on: "I believe it would be a good idea to make a change, but I don't say so to any one but you."

Bunny nodded. He could trust Bob to stand by him, even if he didn't always agree in private.

"But who else can they get?" he asked, after a moment's silence.

"I don't know," said Bob.

"They can't get any one that is any good," Bunny went on, heatedly. "It makes me tired, the way these fellows go on. You might think Hargrave hadn't anything else to do but to come here and coach this football team—that we're doing him a favor to let him!"

"I'm not arguing about it," Bob replied. "I

don't want to have anything to do with the business. I heard that Wallace and Crawford were going to get some one else, and I thought you ought to know."

"But who can they get?" persisted Bunny, who was distinctly upset and annoyed.

"How do I know?" answered Bob. "I told you I hadn't anything to do with it."

Bunny relapsed into silence. Presently he broke forth again.

"It makes me tired! Crawford and Wallace stirring up all this trouble when they ought to be setting an example to the younger fellows! They're jealous!"

Bob wisely kept silent; but Bunny could not study any more, and every now and then broke out into a tirade upon the people who always wanted something for themselves without considering any one else.

"I don't care whether they want Hargrave or not," he said at last. "I don't see what they have to do with it, and they'll have a hard time finding another coach."

A few days later Bob came in with another rumor.

"I hear that Wallace has asked Tom Cary, the old centre, to come and coach," he announced.

Bunny flung down a book he was reading and walked across the floor in a rage.

"Tom Cary!" he burst out. "Why, he hasn't had anything to do with football since he left here. He didn't make the team at college, and I don't

believe he knows the first thing about the modern game. Why, he was centre on the team when I was just a kid, and the game is altogether different now. I like Tom. He's a nice fellow, all right, but he won't do for a coach, and I don't believe he'll come, anyway."

"They say he will," Bob went on. "Wasn't Hargrave coaching when he was here?"

"Of course he was," Bunny went on; "and, what's more, he's been coaching ever since, and he knows the game. I tell you, whether Hargrave can coach or not, I think it isn't decent to tell him we don't want him and get some one else, after all he's done for the school. Why, he wouldn't even take his railroad fare from New York, and goes back and forth every day, so he can be at his business early in the morning."

"Yes, I must say he's been mighty loyal to the school," Bob agreed. "If it hadn't been for him, I don't know where we would have been. But I say, Bunny, what can you do if a fellow like that really isn't good enough?"

"He is good enough," Bunny burst out. "Can't you take my word for it? Don't you suppose I want the team to win, and wouldn't I do anything rather than have it lose? It's all rot to say Hargrave isn't a good coach. He's one of the best in the business."

"You can't convince Wallace and Crawford of it, and they're talking a lot to the other fellows."

"I know they are," said Bunny, gloomily, "and

I suppose there will be trouble over it sooner or later. I wish Wallace had been made captain."

The trouble came soon enough, as Bunny expected.

One evening after dinner Wallace and Crawford came up to the boys' rooms.

They entered awkwardly, and Bunny knew at once that something unusual was to be expected. So did Bob, for he promptly made an excuse and left.

"We came up to consult about football, Bunny," Wallace began. "The fellows on the squad have been talking lately about the coach."

"Oh, they have?" said Bunny, as if this was news to him.

"Yes," Crawford cut in; "they heard that Hargrave was coming back again."

"Why, of course he is!" Bunny replied, heartily. "I told you that a week ago."

"The fellows think we ought to have some one else," Wallace went on. "Of course, Hargrave used to be a fine coach, but in the last two years—"

"Oh, I've heard all that," Bunny interrupted. "I don't know what most of the fellows think, but I do know it wasn't Hargrave's fault, and so do you, Wallace. You were on the team."

"Well, I think he made a mistake not putting Crawford in last year, for one thing," Wallace went on, "and in other ways, too. He doesn't seem to know anything about the forward pass, and he hasn't given us any trick—"

"What's the use of talking?" Crawford interrupted. "The fellows have gotten together and appointed us a committee to come and see you about changing coaches. They all voted for it."

"They did!" exclaimed Bunny. "And who do they think they can get in his place?"

"There's Tom Cary, he'll come," said Crawford.

"How do you know?" asked Bunny.

"Well," answered Wallace, with some hesitation, "some of us have heard from him."

"Did you tell him Hargrave was coming back?" Bunny demanded.

"Oh, I guess he knew that," replied Crawford.

"Do you really think he is as good a coach as Hargrave?" asked Bunny.

"Sure!" they answered in chorus.

"He's been following the game right along," added Wallace.

"And you say all the squad wants this change?" Bunny asked.

"Yes, all of them," replied Crawford.

"Suppose they don't get what they want?" There was a threat in the question that the others felt.

"Well, I'll tell you what they'll do," Wallace retorted: "they won't play any more till you get another coach!"

"Is that it?" said Bunny, his anger rising. "They'll have Tom Cary or they won't play?"

"That's about it," said Crawford. "They asked us to come and see what you were going to do about it."

For some moments Bunny didn't reply; then at last he said, "I'll have to think about this, but I'll let the team know at practice to-morrow."

Bunny thought of little else for the next twenty-four hours. The situation was a trying one, because whatever happened was likely to be disastrous to the team. Moreover, there was no one to advise him. Doctor MacHenry made it a rule not to interfere with the athletic management, and this sort of thing had to be settled by the boys themselves. Billy, he knew, would fume, but give no practical advice. And, further, there wasn't really anything to do if the fellows had decided as Wallace and Crawford had said.

After practice next day Bunny told the football squad that he wanted to see them in the gymnasium after they had dressed. When they were all there he stood on the little platform and spoke to them of what Wallace and Crawford had reported about the coach.

"I think," he went on, "you fellows might have said something to me about it before you made up your minds. Of course, you knew, I suppose, that I was for Hargrave, and thought there wouldn't be any use in talking it over. Well, Wallace and Crawford say that if you don't have some one else than Hargrave you won't play. Is that true?"

Bunny looked down at the boys before him, and they, gazing back at his white, determined face, seemed to hesitate.

"Why don't you say something?" he asked.

"We all decided what to do," Wallace retorted for the crowd.

"Yes," answered Bunny, "that's what you told me before, but I want to hear what the fellows say themselves. Now, all those who won't play unless we get another coach say 'Aye.'"

There was a pause for a moment, and then a loud "Aye!" sounded throughout the gymnasium.

Bunny's face went paler still, but he squared his shoulders resolutely.

"Very well," he said, in a strong, hard voice—"very well, get another coach, and while you are about it get another captain, too!" Then he turned on his heel and left them.

XVI

OUT OF BOUNDS

THE news that Bunny had given up the captaincy of the football team spread through the school rapidly. Every one was talking about it before dinner was over that night, and many a curious glance was cast in his direction as he sat silently in the dining-room.

"I don't want to talk about it," was the only answer he would give when the boys asked him what the trouble was, and that was all the satisfaction his schoolmates could obtain from him.

There was, of course, a prompt division of sympathy among the boys when the cause of the trouble was made known by the other members of the squad, but there was a large majority who sided with Bunny Reeves in the beginning.

It is not to be denied that there was a very general dissatisfaction over Hargrave. There was a more or less universal sentiment that he was far from being a good coach; and this was not altogether unreasonable, for those who sit in the grandstand judge only by the results, and the two successive defeats seemed to point unmistakably to Hargrave's incompetency.

But with Bunny the case was entirely different. All the boys knew that he was far and away the best football player in the school. They had seen him do splendid work year after year in spite of defeats, and attributed to him the fact that they had not been worse beaten. Moreover, he was very popular, so that those who were ready enough to make a fight to secure a new coach were far from willing to see another captain.

Meanwhile, Bunny himself was torn between his anger at the way the fellows had acted and his regret over what he believed would cause the failure of their football season. He didn't see how this dissatisfaction and conflict could be patched up so that all discontent would be eliminated. He was sure that there would be hard feelings among the members of the squad which would last out the entire year, and that, he knew, was fatal to success. He was bitterly disappointed, and inclined to blame himself for not having taken measures to avoid the trouble, only he didn't see just what he could have done. Nor was he at all certain what his future action would be.

Luckily he had all the next day, which was Sunday, and the following Monday morning to puzzle over it, for he realized that the practice that afternoon would settle what was to be the outcome of the controversy.

He was assured that same evening that he would have support among the football squad, for a num-

ber of the fellows came over to Barton Hall to tell him that they would stand by him through thick and thin if he would only tell them what he wanted them to do.

But Bunny would not tell them. He reiterated that he had made his position clear, and it was for the fellows who had brought about the situation to settle it.

"But, Bunny," Bob Struthers said to him when they were alone, "don't you know that Wallace and Crawford will be talking, and are sure to lay all the blame on you? You ought to say something."

"I don't see it that way," Bunny replied. "There isn't anything for me to say. And, what's more, I don't want you to talk, either."

"I'll talk if I want to," Bob retorted. He was much upset over the affair.

"No, you won't," Bunny insisted. "Every one will think you are just expressing my opinions, and I haven't any—yet."

This Bob realized was true, for the two were so intimate that they were always classed together in any question of school politics.

"Of course, you know the way I feel about Hargrave," Bob said, hesitatingly, as if he really wanted to agree with Bunny in the matter, but couldn't.

"Yes, I do," Bunny returned, "and it isn't that part of it that makes me sore over this business. I admit that the fellows who play should have a say in who is to coach. I never even thought they hadn't

a right to express their opinions on the subject, but I don't think it was fair that they should go off and vote not to play without hearing the other side of the case. It wasn't decent not to say a word to me about it."

This Bob agreed with thoroughly, and couldn't blame Bunny for being bitter over it.

"That was all Wallace and Crawford," he said.

"That doesn't excuse the other fellows!" Bunny declared, positively. "It wasn't square, and that's all there is to it. Of course, I know that Wallace and Crawford are at the bottom of it. Listen to this," and Bunny took a letter out of his pocket.

"Who is that from?" asked Bob.

"It's from Tom Cary." And Bunny proceeded to read as follows:

"'DEAR BUNNY,—There is a fellow named Wallace at the school who has been writing to me to come and coach the team for you. I don't see why you couldn't have scribbled a line yourself, but I suppose you *are* busy. I can't remember this chap Wallace; he probably came after my time. Of course, I shall be glad to help you out as much as I can; but where is Hargrave? I didn't suppose you could drive him away from Clinton with a club during the football season. Really, you can't find a better coach than he is. He is up in the game, and I know that a number of colleges have been after him. I suppose he's too busy. He's making quite a reputation in New York, and probably he hasn't the time to go to Clinton. Try to persuade him to help you out for a week or two before the

Academy game, at any rate. I'll see him myself and urge him to do it, and I shall be glad to do all I can, though it won't be much, for I haven't kept up with the new game. Get Hargrave if you can, but let me hear from you in any event, and tell me what the prospects are, for it is about time that Clinton won from the Academy. I shall see the game. I haven't missed one for years, and I don't mean to begin at this late date. Good luck, and be sure to write.

"'Sincerely, THOMAS L. CARY.'

"Now, what do you think of that?" demanded Bunny as he finished.

"Humph!" grunted Bob. "You might think Wallace was the whole thing."

"Never mind that. You heard what Tom Cary has to say about Hargrave," Bunny insisted, "and yet I'm expected to agree with a lot of fellows who don't know anything about it! It makes me tired!" And Bunny stuffed the letter in his pocket and strode up and down the room angrily.

The next day the school buzzed over the football situation. Nothing else was talked of, and there was much speculation as to the outcome. Every one wanted to know what Bunny thought of it, and what he was going to do. Bob Struthers was questioned by all the boys he met, and many of those who had voted against Hargrave said openly that if Bunny wouldn't reconsider his action they would, and were willing to have any one coach he named. A number of fellows went to Bunny's room to tell him this, but he only shook his head, insisting stubbornly that he

hadn't anything more to do with it. They begged him not to give up the captaincy, and still—rather disagreeably, it must be admitted — he held out, and would give them no answer.

Unquestionably this attitude of Bunny's made an unfavorable impression, to say the least, and some of the fellows remarked, after they had gone away, that he was "just a sorehead who wouldn't play if he didn't have his own way." Bob, who knew something of what was going on in the school, saw that the sentiment for and against Bunny was becoming more equally divided, and was very much worried; but his room-mate still refused to let him talk.

"But they'll elect Wallace captain for sure if things go on like this," Bob protested, "and that will spoil everything."

"Let them do what they like. It's up to them," Bunny reiterated, and nothing would induce him to change this position.

The fact is that Bunny was not only angry at the way the football squad had acted, but he was hurt that it should seem necessary for him, after all these years he had been playing for Clinton, to deny the things that those opposed to him were saying. He knew that many believed his attitude in the matter was a result of his caring more for the captaincy and for having his own way than for the success of the team, but he was too proud to deny it.

Sunday afternoon Bunny went off alone for a walk in the woods. He wanted to think, for he hadn't

made up his mind what he should do. He realized that so long as he was hearing rumors of what the other fellows were saying he would be angry, and that was not the best frame of mind to be in when there is a serious decision to be made. And it was all very serious to Bunny.

He walked through the little town out into the country, and then, leaving the road, plunged into the woods. His camp training had taught him about trees and birds and the little animals that inhabit the fields and forests, and he began to find that he was not so seriously upset when he thought of what Wallace and Crawford might be saying, and presently he was shaking his head and telling himself that "he guessed it would be all right, anyway." Gradually his anger cooled, and, without realizing it, he was whistling as he strode along beating down the undergrowth to make a path for himself, his mind at length made up as to what he should do.

"I'll show them I'm not a baby," he said aloud, as he went on again with a light heart.

Presently he came to a path running diagonally through the woods, and, turning into it, walked at a brisker pace.

At a bend in the narrow road he saw, a hundred or so yards ahead of him, two figures strolling along with their backs to him. They looked familiar, and when he came closer he saw that they were Walters and Thornton. He slackened his pace at once. He wasn't in the humor to talk to either of them;

but as he looked toward them he saw thin wisps of smoke, and every now and then quite a cloud of it rising above their heads.

"Humph! cigarettes!" muttered Bunny to himself, rather disgustedly. "That lets them off the football team, all right. I won't have it so long as I'm cap—" He stopped short with a rueful little smile. "But I'm not captain," he thought, "so it isn't any of my business. All the same, they oughtn't to do it, and if Billy should catch them at it he'd report them to the doctor, and then good-bye to Walters and 'Me Too'; that's the one thing Billy won't stand. You'd think they'd have better sense, but they aren't taking many chances out here. Hello! who's this?"

There was a rustling in the leaves behind him, and there stood the old trainer, in his Sunday best, smiling at him.

"I've had an eye on you, young man, for a mile back," Billy announced, "but you walk too fast for me, and I guess you're deaf, because I called to you, though I wasn't sure it was you. My eyes aren't as good as they used to be."

"I didn't hear you," said Bunny, stepping in front of the old man so that he shut off his view up the lane. "What do you say to going back?"

"Oh, it's early yet," returned Billy. "I started out to make an afternoon of it. There won't be many fine days like this till next spring. Come along, you aren't tired yet."

Bunny was in a quandary. He didn't fancy Walters and Thornton particularly, and he knew that they shouldn't be sneaking off this way smoking; but he didn't want them to get into trouble if he could help it. He and the old trainer had been out on walks before, so it was quite useless for him to plead that he was tired or to try and persuade Billy to go back. Moreover, he couldn't continue to stand in front of the man indefinitely without exciting suspicion. For a moment he didn't know what to do. If he could only warn the fellows ahead! But how? Suddenly an idea came to him.

"Look, Billy, look!" he shouted at the top of his voice, and seizing the old trainer by the shoulder turned him half round and pointed to a giant oak near them.

"What is it?" exclaimed Billy, excitedly gazing into the branches.

"Oh, pshaw! I was mistaken," returned Bunny, ruefully. "It looked like a pure white squirrel, but I guess it must have been the sun. White squirrels are mighty rare, you know."

"Humph!" grunted Billy, "I thought it was a lion by the noise you made."

Bunny laughed almost hysterically, and glanced up the road. His ruse had been successful. Walters and Thornton, startled by the cry of "Look, Billy!" turned hastily, dropping their cigarettes as they saw who was behind them, and started off at a brisk walk.

"Did you ever see a white squirrel, Billy?" Bunny went on, easily.

But Billy wasn't paying any attention. He was peering up the road at the two fast-retreating figures with half-closed eyes.

"Who are those two fellows, Bunny?" he asked.

"I was thinking about that when you came up," Bunny replied, trying not to lie if he could help it.

"They look like Clinton boys," the old trainer went on. "They seem to be hustling along, all right."

"Oh, never mind them," said Bunny. "I came out here to get rid of school for a little while."

Billy, who knew to what Bunny referred, took up the matter at once, and forgot for the moment the two boys ahead of them.

"I hope you're going to be sensible about this football foolery over Mr. Hargrave," he said.

"How do you mean?" questioned Bunny, as they started to walk ahead.

"I mean you aren't going to let anybody keep him away."

"I haven't anything to do with it any more," Bunny replied.

The old trainer sniffed contemptuously. "I know you resigned from being captain, but—you'll have more to do with it shortly. And you'll stick to Mr. Hargrave, hey?"

"Yes," returned Bunny, seriously, "I'll stand by Mr. Hargrave as long as I have anything to do with it."

"That's right!" exclaimed Billy; and then, stopping suddenly, he looked down at the path where half a cigarette lay burning among the leaves. He stamped it out and glanced up the road, but a turn in it hid the two from sight. "Do you know who those two boys were?" Billy demanded, looking keenly at Bunny.

Bunny hesitated for an instant. "Yes, I do," he answered, resolutely.

They stood for a moment eying each other steadily, and then the old trainer shook his head.

"I won't ask you who they are because—because I know you wouldn't tell me," he said, slowly.

XVII

COACHING FROM THE SIDE-LINES

IN the mean time Wallace and Crawford were busy telling their side of the story to the whole school, and, as there was no one to contradict it, they gained many supporters who would otherwise have sympathized with Bunny on general principles.

Bunny's stand had come very unexpectedly. "He'll give in, all right," Wallace had predicted, with confidence; but when the captain forced the issue as he had, they were considerably disconcerted. Crawford in particular was worried, for the announcement that Bunny had resigned caused an uproar through the school, and the question of Hargrave's ability to coach was entirely forgotten. The almost universal sentiment that Saturday evening was that anything was better than having the captain resign.

It is only fair to say that, at the outset, neither Wallace nor Crawford had planned to depose Bunny, and they were quite as much surprised as any one else. But immediately the situation was created Wallace saw his chance.

"He's not the whole team," he said to Crawford. "We can get along without him all right. It won't

be hard to elect another captain," and Crawford, who was Wallace's best friend, knew the drift of the other's thoughts.

Wallace had wanted to be captain the year before; he had been bitterly disappointed when Bunny was chosen, so this crisis gave him an unlooked-for opportunity which he was quick to recognize. He was certain to be elected if it developed that a successor to Bunny must be chosen.

On Sunday morning he found a decided sentiment among the football squad to keep Bunny at any price, and promptly set to work to counteract it. He had a few supporters from the very beginning—notably Crawford, Walters, and Thornton—and as the day passed he gained others.

"You might think we hadn't any interest in the football team," Wallace maintained, while the others listened. "I don't deny Bunny's a good player and all that, but when it comes to saying that we fellows just *have* to do what he wants, I don't think it's fair. Certainly we ought to have something to say about who is to coach." His audience nodded in approval.

"We work just as hard as he does," said Walters, who, so far, of all the squad did the least.

"That's right!" Thornton put in mechanically.

"Everybody knows that Hargrave isn't any good any more," Crawford insisted. "We won't beat the Academy with him. Of course, he's for Bunny—always has been—and I guess Bunny feels that he can do about as he pleases with Hargrave."

"The whole question is just this," Wallace explained: "If we do as Bunny says, then we'll lose the Academy game, as we have in the last two years. If we don't, we have to elect another captain. Of course, Bunny's a good player, but he isn't the whole team, though he seems to think he is."

By Sunday evening Wallace and his party had gained a considerable following, principally because Bunny's side of the story was not told. The fact that the football squad, under the guidance of Wallace and Crawford, had voted not to play if Hargrave coached was entirely ignored, and much emphasis put on Bunny's stubbornness in the face of the unanimous desire for a change.

"He thinks he knows more than all of us put together," Wallace reiterated. "There isn't anybody in the school except Bunny who wants Hargrave."

But these arguments were not the most effective. The school generally, while they were more or less opposed to Hargrave, would rather see Bunny as captain, even if he did insist upon retaining the former coach, and this sentiment was reflected in the majority of the players. But, to counteract this, Wallace insisted that Bunny intended to leave the team unless he had his own way, and this created a very unfavorable impression.

"Oh, you can bet he won't play!" was the argument. "He'll sit in the stand and criticise everything, and if we should lose he'll be tickled to death!"

"Bunny wouldn't do that," some one protested.

"Oh, wouldn't he?" Wallace retorted. "Do you think that, after being captain, he's coming out under somebody else? I guess not. No, sir, he'll play the baby act, and if he can't be captain he won't play. You'll see at Monday's practice."

This contention had considerable weight. It seemed entirely plausible, for, after all, no one likes to take a subordinate position after being the leader. But if so, it showed that Bunny's motives were entirely selfish, and that he was willing to sacrifice the success of the team to have his own way. Moreover, his silence pointed to the probable truth of what Wallace and his party said. It looked very much as if Bunny, knowing how valuable his services were, meant to take advantage of it, and was bent upon doing what he pleased, whether the school liked it or not.

There were many who maintained that "Bunny wasn't that sort of a fellow," and that he would be found ready to play, no matter what was done; but Wallace's arguments were the result of his own belief in what he would have done in Bunny's place, and, therefore, the more convincing. Wallace knew, however, as did the rest of the school, that without Bunny the team would lose much of its strength, but he hoped that if he were once elected captain he could prevail upon Bunny to play, and counted upon the boy's fondness for the game to accomplish the same end for him. He was sure that Bunny

would give in sooner or later, and that the team would be just the same except for the change in captain and coach—which would not be a change for the worse, he thought, with becoming modesty.

Monday morning found the school in a feverish state over the football situation. Wallace and his party went about from one group of boys to another repeating their previous arguments, and highly elated over their success. Since Saturday evening there had been a very considerable change of opinion, and if Bunny failed to come out for practice he would find the great majority of the boys against him, at whatever cost to the success of the team.

Wallace and Crawford were, by this time, absolutely sure in their own minds that Bunny would not appear, and made their arrangements accordingly.

"We'll get all the fellows together in the gym before practice and elect another captain," Crawford explained to Walters and Thornton.

"We have to have a captain to run things, you know," Wallace put in. He did not wish to appear too eager in this matter, and was glad to have Crawford manage the election.

"You're sure Bunny won't be there?" Walters questioned.

"He won't be on the field," Wallace answered, positively. "He'll be up in the bleachers. You'll see."

"Then we'll show him he's not the whole thing," said Walters.

"Sure we will," Thornton echoed.

But, alas! for the schemes of Wallace. The first boy to be dressed and ready for practice that afternoon was Bunny Reeves. He was out on the football field practicing drop-kicking when the others began to arrive, and the news quickly spread throughout the school.

The opposition was considerably disconcerted, for so emphatic had been their assurances that Bunny would not be there that his mere presence seemed to controvert all that had been said against him, and the sentiment immediately changed accordingly. Wallace hurriedly called his lieutenants together for a consultation, and instead of taking an active part and proposing the election of a captain at once, they decided it would be better to wait.

"For," Wallace told himself, "as things were then, Bunny would have everything his own way."

And this was true enough. There had been too much talk of Bunny's being a baby and not playing, so when the school came down to see the practice and found him there, all ready, they immediately forgot all about their opposition to Hargrave, and were ready to let Bunny do exactly as he liked.

Bunny acted as he always had except, of course, that he didn't take charge of the practice. He ran around and kicked a football, as every one else does, until the time comes when those in charge map out the practice for the day, and tell the men what they are to do. Wallace and Crawford were distinctly

worried, for as the minutes went by and nothing was being done, they began to feel in a rather awkward position.

"Where's Billy?" Wallace asked, and looking about the field and not seeing him, he went into the dressing-rooms and gymnasium in search. But the old trainer was not to be found. Knowing what was going on and what was likely to occur, he quietly disappeared. If the matter was worked out by the boys themselves it would stay worked out, and he didn't mean to take any hand in it whatever.

Wallace returned, after a vain search for Billy, to find things just as he had left them. Bunny, quite rightly, took the position that he had no authority to tell the fellows what to do, and so waited with the rest to see what would come of it. For the last week he had been selecting two elevens, but he "wasn't captain any more," he told himself.

In the grandstand there was much speculation as to what would happen, but it was soon apparent that the opposition to Bunny had collapsed completely. They looked down on the field and laughed as they realized what was taking place there, and finally some one started the cry of "Line up! Line up!"

Then Walters took a hand in the matter.

"I say, Wallace, let's line up!" he called, so that every one in the field could hear him.

"All right," replied Wallace, "I'm willing."

For a moment or two there was a strained silence. Wallace tried to calculate his strength, and wondered if he dared to assume the authority that was suggested in Walters' proposal. He thought he would test it, at any rate.

"Come on," he called, "line up!"

But no one moved. The boys stood where they were, some looking to see what others would do, and one or two laughing outright. Those in the grandstand, seeing what the condition of affairs was, began shouting again.

"Bunny Reeves! Bunny Reeves!" they called, and their desire was unmistakable.

"Come on, Bunny, line us up!" some one shouted, and in a moment the cry was taken up by half the boys on the field.

Wallace, seeing that things were going against him, tried to stem the tide and started to name two teams.

"Walters, centre; Shepard and Cross, guards—" But he could go no further, for every one began laughing, and Wallace turned red. "All right, line yourselves up!" he growled.

"Bunny Reeves! Bunny Reeves!" shouted the grandstand.

Bunny began to laugh himself, it was so funny from his point of view.

"Fellows," he said, at length, "we'll have a meeting of the squad after practice to see what we are going to do. In the mean time let's line up this

way," and he gave out the positions for the two teams while the grandstand cheered joyously.

But although everything seemed to favor Bunny just then, he knew that the trouble was by no means over. It would be no victory for him to be chosen captain again if Wallace and Crawford should stop playing, and perhaps carry two or three other sympathizers with them. So he was careful not to do anything that might hurt their feelings, and tried to act as if nothing had happened.

And the surprising part of it was that the practice was the best seen on the field so far that season. It seemed as if the boys were trying their hardest: hurrying to their places when the ball was down, helping the runner, and backing up the tacklers till the boys in the grandstand, catching the enthusiasm, cheered the two teams as if it were a regular game.

Wallace set a fine example, and it was at once apparent what he meant to do, but the stars of the afternoon were Walters and Thornton. For the first time they showed what they were really capable of, and Bunny opened his eyes in astonishment.

"I didn't think they had it in them," he said to himself.

Altogether it was a fine practice, and Bunny kept them hard at it. He wasn't at all sure what the meeting afterward would bring forth, for he had not relinquished his determination to stand by Hargrave; but under the circumstances he thought it was the

part of wisdom to get all the practice they could, no matter who might be in charge the next day.

At length, at a nod from Billy Bryan, who had returned, Bunny stopped them.

"All right, fellows," he called, "that's enough for to-day! But don't forget the meeting in the gym."

XVIII

TEAM WORK

BUNNY was thinking hard as he changed from his football suit to his every-day clothes. He had Tom Cary's letter in his pocket, and he felt sure that, if he read it aloud, his victory over Wallace would be assured, but he wanted more than that. It would be easy enough to humiliate those who had actually opposed him, but that would, in all probability, disrupt the team completely, and almost anything would be better than that.

"I won't tell any more than I have to," he resolved, as he left the dressing-room.

It was nearly dark when, after all the boys were assembled there, Bunny stepped on the platform and faced the football squad.

"What's the matter with Bunny Reeves?" some one called at the back of the room.

"He's all right!" they shouted, and from that moment there was no doubt about the outcome of the meeting.

Bunny was pleased, although a trifle embarrassed.

"I'm much obliged to you, fellows," he began, as the cheer died away. "I don't quite know how

to begin this meeting, but I think we'd better just talk it out between ourselves. I don't know why every one should have thought I wouldn't play any more, because I never meant to quit. The fact is, fellows," he went on, earnestly, "I want to do everything I can to make the team a success this year, and I guess that's what we all want, even though we do differ about who shall be the coach. I'll admit I was mad when I found you had made up your minds about Hargrave without saying a word to me, but I'm all over that now, though I haven't changed my opinion. Now, what are we going to do about Hargrave?"

"We're going to have him coach the team," Blair called, cheerfully. "What's the matter with Hargrave?"

"He's all right!"

"Who's all right?"

"Hargrave!"

The shout echoed about the big gymnasium, and seemed to leave no room for doubt as to the opinion of the majority.

"That's what I've always thought," said Bunny, with a smile; but he continued, seriously: "I want everybody to be sure of it. You see, it isn't fair to Hargrave, and it won't be good for the team if most of us haven't any confidence in the coach—we can't half try to do what he tells us. We must get together and do all we can to make the team a strong one. Now I'd like Wallace to tell us how he feels

about it." And Bunny stepped down from the platform.

There was a call for Wallace, and a good deal of curiosity to know what he would say.

"I haven't changed my opinion either," he began, with a smile. "But everybody seems to be for Hargrave, and I want to say right now that I'm ready to work just as hard as I know how to make the team a success under him. Bunny's right when he says we've got to get together, so I'm satisfied to do my level best whoever coaches us. I did think maybe we could get a better coach, but," he ended, "we couldn't have a better captain."

"What's the matter with Wallace?" Bunny shouted, jumping to the platform and waving his arms, and the boys gave the answer with marked enthusiasm. This change of front on Wallace's part gave promise of a reunited team, and Bunny did not think of what motives might have prompted it.

"Well," he said, with a grin, "if you fellows insist upon having Hargrave, I guess I'm still captain, and I don't see what there is to meet about."

But, of course, this was by no means the end of the talking, and it was soon decided unanimously that Hargrave was the best coach that Clinton ever had and that Bunny was the best captain. Everybody was cheered, and when at length they started away all were vowing that they would win from Academy easily, and that Bunny and Hargrave and Wallace were the best fellows in the world.

Naturally enough Bunny was delighted, but there was one matter still to be settled before he could be quite satisfied, and after a moment's hesitation he made up his mind to have it out with Walters and Thornton before dinner that night. Yesterday he had been almost indifferent at having discovered the two smoking on the sly. To-day it was a much more serious matter to him.

They seemed surprised when he opened the door of their room after they had answered his knock, but they were friendly enough, and asked him to sit down.

"I've only come for a minute," he began, not knowing quite how to proceed. "I saw you fellows yesterday afternoon out in the woods."

Walters changed color, and began to bluster.

"Well, what of it? I guess we can go out for a walk if we want to."

"I guess we can," Thornton put in.

"I'm not talking about that," Bunny replied. "It's smoking cigarettes, I mean."

"Who said we were smoking?" Walters demanded, roughly.

"I saw you," Bunny asserted, keeping his temper.

"I thought maybe you did," Walters confessed. "That was Billy Bryan with you, wasn't it?"

"It was," Bunny replied.

"Then I suppose it's all over with us," Walters went on. "Old Mac had us up once before already. I'm surprised Billy hasn't told him."

"So am I," Thornton said.

"Billy didn't know you," Bunny explained. "But he very nearly caught you. He found part of a lighted cigarette where you fellows had dropped them, and he saw you, too; but he couldn't tell who you were. You were too far off by that time."

"Did he ask you who we were?" Walters questioned, anxiously.

"No," said Bunny; "he said it wouldn't be worth while."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you for not giving us away," Walters replied, very gratefully for him.

"So am I!" exclaimed Thornton, with unusual fervor.

"As far as the school goes," Bunny went on, "it isn't any of my affair, but the football team is. You know smoking is mighty bad for training, and I just came up to ask you fellows not to do it any more. Both of you played a fine game to-day, and we need you badly in the line, but, you see, as captain of the team, I can't stand for smoking, no matter who does it. That's all I have to say about it, and now I'm off. Good-night." And Bunny left them without another word.

"Say, Thorn," said Walters, after a long silence, "I believe he shouted out that way yesterday to warn us about Billy. He's a mighty decent chap, isn't he?"

"He sure is," Thornton agreed. "We'd have been fired all right if it hadn't been for him."

"Say, I'm going to cut it out."

"Cigarettes?"

"Yes."

"Me too." And they both did.

After dinner Bunny and Bob Struthers talked it over.

"I'm glad it came out all right," said the latter, cheerfully.

"It's the best thing that could have happened," Bunny declared, with enthusiasm. "The fellows will stick together now for the rest of the season, you see if they don't. Gee! Think how blue I was last night, and now—" Bunny hummed a little tune, to show how joyful he was.

"The foxy Wallace did the lightning change act in fine shape, didn't he?" Bob remarked, scornfully.

"If he stays changed that's all I care about—and I think he will," Bunny replied. "And, say, Bob, did you notice Walters and 'Me Too' this afternoon? They're turning out better than I expected."

"They've a good way to turn yet," Bob answered.

"You're a pessimist, Robert, my son." Bunny laughed. "Never mind, if they go at it the way they did to-day we'll beat the Academy badly enough to make up for the last two years. It was a fine practice."

"I wonder how Ted is coming on?" Bob murmured, reflectively.

"I don't know; but if he's having the same troubles I have, I'm sorry for him."

"Oh, he's having troubles, I guess," Bob surmised.

"I wish he were here instead of at the Academy," Bunny said, regretfully.

"That would be peachy!" Bob agreed. "Say, Bunny, it will be queer playing against him, won't it?"

"I'll know I've been playing, all right," returned Bunny. "Ted will be in the game from start to finish."

"Wish we had a few like him."

"Just one like him would suit me down to the ground," Bunny replied, wistfully. "We could put him in at full, and then we *would* have a backfield!"

"By-the-way," Bob exclaimed, presently, "you'll have to tell Tom Cary that you don't want him to coach."

"That's so," said Bunny.

"You'd better write him all about it," Bob suggested.

"Yes; but I don't like to tell Tom that all this fuss was made because I wouldn't have him instead of Hargrave," Bunny protested. "He's a good fellow, and I don't want to hurt his feelings."

"You needn't do that," Bob replied. "Just say Hargrave is coming back, and everything is all right. You might ask him to come up later in the season and coach the centre men. He could do that, and it would please him, I'm sure."

"Bob, you're a brick!" Bunny exclaimed, hunting

up his writing materials. "Do you think I ought to write 'Mr. Cary'?" he asked, after a moment's thought.

"Why, no," said Bob, scornfully.

"But I can't call him 'Tom,'" Bunny insisted, "he's so much older than I am."

"Just say 'My dear Cary,'" Bob advised. And Bunny went to work on the letter. It wasn't very easy, because he was in a rather peculiar position in the matter, and he didn't wish to seem ungrateful or indifferent to Cary's offer. Nor did he want to go into details over the controversy, so there was considerable scratching and rewriting before he at length succeeded in making it suit him.

"Listen to this, Bob," he said, at last, and read as follows:

"My Dear Cary,—It was awfully good of you to say you would coach. For a while we didn't know whether Hargrave was coming or not, but now he is, and I hope he'll find a good team waiting for him. We'd like to have had you, of course, and maybe you'd be willing to pay us a visit later in the season and give the centre men some pointers. I'm sure Hargrave would like you to, and I know I would. It is mighty decent of you to offer to help us, and we appreciate it very much indeed.

"Sincerely,

"Bunny Reeves."

"That's all right, I guess," Bob said, without much enthusiasm.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Bunny.

"Oh, nothing, except that we did know Hargrave was coming all the time."

"No, we didn't," Bunny protested. "We only found out to-night that the fellows would have him."

"If you put it that way, I suppose you're right," agreed Bob.

"I had to put it that way," Bunny explained. "I don't want to hurt his feelings, and I don't want to tell him how it happened. If you think it's an easy letter to write, you sit down and try it."

'It's all right," Bob replied. "Send it, and have done with the whole beastly business."

"It was sort of beastly, wasn't it?" Bunny remarked, as he sealed and stamped the envelope.

"It certainly was," agreed Bob.

"But it's all over now—and, say," Bunny added, cheerfully, "it isn't so bad being captain, after all."

XIX

DELAYING THE GAME

EVEN Bunny could find no fault with the spirit shown by the candidates for the football team, and during the next week or ten days he hadn't a care in the world. There was never a word of discontent about who should be coach, and all the fellows seemed determined to do the best that was in them. Bunny was delighted, and worked himself and his men harder than ever, in order that there should be no delay, and that, instead of being obliged to drill them in first principles, as was usually the case, Hargrave could begin at once to teach them plays and new formations.

Walters and Thornton had changed considerably for the better, and Crawford had evidently decided that this year Hargrave should have no excuse to keep him on the side-lines. Of course, Wallace had always been sure of a place at right-half, for, except Bunny, he was the best player in the Clinton squad; but this fact didn't keep him from doing his best, and it did look as if he was sorry for all the discontent he had stirred up, and was determined to do all he could to set it right.

In fact, every one was enthusiastic, and nearly the entire school came out to practice and cheered, hoping to encourage the players, and thus do what they could for the success of the eleven. Even Billy Bryan, who was naturally pessimistic, seemed to think they were going to have a good team.

Said he to Bunny one day: "That steam-box is working fine, hey? I don't say you'll beat the Academy, but—you'll come near it." And this was excessive praise from the old trainer.

But as the days went by everybody became impatient to see Hargrave on the field and the real work started, and, of course, Bunny was as anxious as the rest.

"Do you suppose he'd come sooner than he agreed to if I asked him?" Bunny said to Bob one evening.

"Can't hurt to write to him," Bob replied. "He can only say 'No,' and, anyway, I should think he'd be glad to know how things are going."

"I'll do it," Bunny announced, and forthwith sat down, and, after telling Hargrave how well the practice was progressing, begged him to try and arrange to take charge of them as soon as possible.

Hargrave's answer was prompt, but most unexpected. Bunny read it aloud to Bob the evening it came, and the tone of his voice betrayed the dismay and disappointment he felt:

"My Dear Reeves,—When I tell you that I know all that has happened at Clinton over the question of my

coaching and the part you played in it, you will understand my great surprise when I read your letter. I hardly thought it was necessary, under the circumstances, to write you that I had abandoned my intention of looking after the school eleven this fall. I do not mean, however, to permit what has occurred to lessen my interest in Clinton football, and shall do what I can in the future as I have in the past. This year I shall be content to let some one else take charge, and hope quite sincerely that your season will be successful.

"Yours very truly,

"HORACE HARGRAVE."

Bob Struthers shook his head dubiously.

"I was afraid of it," he acknowledged. "I didn't say anything to you about it, but it did strike me that if Hargrave found out how all the fellows were kicking, he wouldn't feel much like coming back. And you can't blame him. I was hoping he wouldn't hear of it."

"But what does he mean?" asked the perplexed Bunny.

"He means he isn't going to coach," Bob replied.

"Of course," Bunny said, impatiently; "but why should he be surprised at my writing to him? And why does his letter sound as if we were strangers? He always called me 'Bunny' before, and now he seems to think it is all my fault."

"Read it again," Bob suggested; and after Bunny had complied, he was still as much at sea as ever.

"It certainly does sound as if he thought it was your fault," Bob admitted.

"But how can it be?" demanded Bunny. "And he says he knows the part I played in it."

"I give it up," Bob admitted. "I guess it will be Tom Cary, after all."

"It won't be Tom Cary," Bunny protested, violently. "He says himself that he doesn't know the modern game, and I'd rather not have any one. I'm going to write Hargrave again."

The answer to the second letter arrived a day or two later, and was very short and emphatic. Hargrave said he would not come, and that he supposed Bunny's urgent appeal was because he couldn't get any one else.

Bunny was at his wits' end. He didn't know which way to turn, and instead of looking forward eagerly to the success of his team, he saw only failure ahead. Except for Tom Cary, who just wouldn't do, there was no one available. There were, to be sure, other Clinton graduates who knew how to coach, and who might have helped if they had not lived so far away. And without a good coach it was folly to think of winning from the Academy. As soon as the fellows learned that Hargrave was not coming their enthusiasm would vanish. They might just as well abandon all hope of success that season unless in some way Hargrave could be induced to change his decision.

"And I thought my troubles were all over!" sighed Bunny, dolefully.

But it was not only on account of football that

Bunny worried over this recent development. He admired Hargrave very much indeed, and heretofore they had been the best of friends. The older man's letters had been cordial and intimate; they had always begun "My dear Bunny," and now it was the cold and formal "Reeves." Moreover, these last two letters had seemed to accuse the boy of being the cause of the trouble, and he couldn't understand it. Still, something had to be done; he didn't propose to give up without making every effort.

"There isn't any use in my writing again," he told Bob; "he wouldn't answer it."

"How about getting old Mac to write to him?" Bob suggested.

Bunny shook his head. "That isn't worth considering. The doctor won't have anything to do with the athletics. He settled that long ago. He never has interfered in any way, and he won't now, I'm positive."

"Why couldn't Wallace and that bunch have kept quiet?" Bob burst out, wrathfully. "See the trouble they've made by their foolishness."

"There isn't any use growling about that," Bunny answered, sensibly; "that's all over and done with. What we have to do is to get Hargrave here. I wish I could see him."

"Why don't you go and see him?" Bob suggested.

"I don't believe old Mac would let me," Bunny said, hesitatingly.

"It wouldn't do any harm to find out," returned the practical Bob.

"You're right; I'll go and see him this minute, but I'm not hopeful." And Bunny, in pursuit of this idea, went straight to see the head-master.

"I don't know about this, my boy," said Doctor MacHenry, when Bunny had explained the situation. "I don't fancy your going off to New York alone."

"But, sir," pleaded Bunny, "we must get him to come and coach the team. I've written, but that doesn't seem to do any good. I don't see anything else to do, unless you'll write to him, sir."

The doctor shook his head. "I don't interfere with the athletics, you know. That part of it you boys must look out for yourselves. The only hand I will take is to see that it doesn't interfere with your class standing, and that you behave yourselves. That is as far as I will go."

"That is what I thought, sir," Bunny replied, "so I couldn't see any other way but to see Mr. Hargrave myself and explain just how things happened. I think I could make him understand."

"When do you want to go?" asked the doctor.

"As soon as I can," answered Bunny. "I don't want to leave the team a minute if I can help it, but the quicker it is settled the better."

"Well," said the old doctor, finally, "I must run up to New York myself for a day, so perhaps we can go together. I didn't mean to go so soon, but—well, can you be ready to-morrow?"

"Oh yes, sir!" exclaimed Bunny, delighted.

"Very well, then, that's settled; but we must not establish a precedent, understand that."

Bunny, not very sure of what a precedent might be, promised, nevertheless, and the morrow found them speeding to New York together, a novelty which Bunny rather enjoyed, for he had always been good friends with the doctor, and, although rather afraid of him, found that, once away from the school, he forgot to be the head-master, and they talked of lots of things together till Bunny almost ceased to remember that he was different from other people.

"Are you going to see your father?" the doctor asked.

"I hadn't thought of it," said Bunny.

"Don't you think it would as well if you did?"

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Bunny; "but, you see, sir, we haven't anything to talk about, and he's awfully busy. I am not sure he'd want me to interrupt him."

"I think I'd go and see," the doctor said. And Bunny promised he would.

They arranged to meet for an afternoon train, so that they might return together, and as the doctor had a good many things to do, he started Bunny on the right car for Hargrave's office, which was in one of the huge office buildings down-town. The doctor didn't like the idea of Bunny going about alone; but, after all, the boy wasn't a child any more, and was old enough to look out for himself.

Bunny found the building without difficulty, but he hesitated for an instant in front of the elevators. He hated them as he hated high places, but he stepped into the little cage and was soon flying toward the roof. He was glad when they reached the twelfth floor and he could get out and breathe comfortably once more.

He found the office, but was informed that Hargrave himself was "at the bridge."

"At the bridge?" Bunny repeated, looking vaguely at the young woman behind the desk.

"Yes; he's there every day now."

"When will he be back?"

"Not till to-morrow," answered the girl. "He only comes in for a few minutes in the morning to look over his mail."

"Then I will have to go to the bridge. How do you get there?" asked Bunny.

The girl was very nice, and directed him as well as she could; but it was a new bridge over one of the rivers near the city, and it took nearly two hours before Bunny reached the place.

There he found himself in front of the fenced-in approach to a bridge in the process of erection. All he could see of it were the high, latticework towers, raw-red against the blue sky. From where he stood there seemed to be but one entrance to the enclosure, and over this was a sign reading:

NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS

Bunny decided, after a moment's hesitation, that he had business; so, pushing open the rough board gate, walked in. Before him were a number of bare, unpainted wooden houses, and on one he saw the word "Office" lettered on the door.

"That's the place," he said to himself, and made for it.

On the way he met a boy of about his own age dressed in blue overalls, stained here and there with spots of bright red paint. They looked at each other for a minute, and Bunny thought it might be wise to ask his way.

"I'm looking for Mr. Hargrave," he said. "Do you know where he is?"

"He's out on the work," was the reply. "You can't see him till dinner-time, and maybe not then. I've known him to stay till it was dark."

"But," protested Bunny, "I must see him right away."

"They won't leave you out there," said the boy, "not for nothin'. They're awful strict, and the boss wouldn't no more think of lettin' you go than flyin'. You'll have to wait, I guess."

"I can't wait!" exclaimed Bunny. "I've come a long way to see him, and I have to meet a train to go back this afternoon, and — oh, don't you understand? I must see him — it's very important!"

"Ever been on a bridge while she was bein' put up?" asked the other.

"No, I never have," replied Bunny; "but I'll go anywhere to see Mr. Hargrave."

"Oh, you will!" The boy chuckled, and then looked about to see if they were observed. "Say," he began, in a whisper, "if you won't let on who showed you, I'll take you out on the work without no one seein'—that is, if you ain't afraid."

"Certainly I'm not afraid," said Bunny.

"Then come along with me," said the boy, and he led the way to a narrow opening between the fence and one of the wooden houses.

Bunny followed promptly. His only thought was to find Hargrave, and he was willing to go anywhere to do it.

XX

A DROP

WHEN Bunny stepped through the narrow opening he came into a large yard filled to overflowing with parts of the unfinished bridge. All about him were heaps of structural steel; beams piled on beams, each numbered in red and white figures; immense girders, capped and ready to be placed; braces made up of several pieces, held together by a crisscrossing of latticework; barrels and boxes containing all sorts of small objects; and a thousand and one twisted bits of iron, for which Bunny could not have imagined the use nor guessed the name. To his right a railroad track entered through a wide opening in the fence, and at that moment a string of empty cars moved slowly away. In front of him rose the superstructure of the half-finished span, while far out above the river he could see the swinging arm of the big travelling-crane.

But Bunny scarcely noticed these things. He was almost overwhelmed by the seeming bustle and confusion about him, and disturbed by the overpowering noises. It was deafening. Everywhere there was the harsh clang of metal striking metal, mingled with

the shriek of car wheels as they rounded curves, the grunting of many stationary engines, the rhythmical bark of the air-compressors, and above and below and between the incessant, nerve-wracking rattle of the riveting-machines.

Bunny followed his guide mechanically. As they rounded a pile of braces the boy suddenly stopped, and, pushing him back, crouched down out of sight.

"Don't move," he whispered; "there comes 'Reddy' Garrison, the boss riveter. If he seen me here with you, he'd fire me off the job so quick I'd forget my name was Joe Herrick."

Bunny saw a short, sandy-haired man hurrying past them, muttering to himself as he went. He looked neither to the right nor to the left, and made straight for the office as if his life depended upon it.

"He won't be back for a couple of hours now," Joe volunteered. "He'll be workin' the telephone for all it's worth, makin' trouble for some one all right. He's been wantin' supplies for a week now, but they've only been comin' in little dribs, and I guess he's gettin' kind of tired of it. Anyway, he won't see us. Come on."

"Do you work on the bridge?" asked Bunny. He had never talked to this sort of a boy before, and he was distinctly interested.

"Do I work on the bridge?" exclaimed Joe, with a grin. "Well, I just guess I do! Been workin' at this kind of business for near five years."

"What do you do?" asked Bunny.

"I'm what you might call a riveter's assistant, though we don't have names for 'em up here. You'll see more of us out on the work. Come on."

Again Joe led the way, and soon they came upon the bridge itself. They were comparatively alone. The workmen were either below or above them, and so busy with their appointed tasks that they took no heed as the boys stepped out on the rough planking that formed the temporary floor of the incompleted structure.

"Say," Joe began, hesitatingly, "did you ever work?"

Bunny felt himself blushing. It did seem as if this boy, who was no older than he, had a distinct advantage over him, and the question was embarrassing. He had never worked, of course, and it had never entered his head to think of it.

"No," he said, reluctantly—"no, I never did."

"I suppose your dad foots the bills?" was the next question.

Bunny nodded. "I suppose he does." This was another thing he had never thought of.

"Well, my dad—he works on the bridge, too, and he makes me work with him. It must be fine not to have anything to do."

"Oh, I have lots of things to do," Bunny asserted, hastily. "I've got my lessons and—and—"

"That ain't *work*," Joe interrupted. "Goin' to school ain't work!" He said it very scornfully, and Bunny seemed to realize that what he said was perhaps true.

"It ain't what you'd really call work," Joe went on. "Why, when you come to stickin' to your job ten hours a day, leanin' over, handin' red-hot rivets to a feller ten feet below you, bendin' your back, maybe, a hundred times a hour—well, when night comes you know you've been doin' somethin', I can tell you. Then you go home and go to bed. It's all you're fit for. Then the next day you're at it again. That's work! In a rush I've been at it eighteen hours steady without thinkin'; but it all comes of gettin' used to it, I guess."

As the boys talked they walked slowly, picking their way cautiously through a litter of empty rivet-kegs, until at length, as they came from behind the shelter of the shore, the wind struck them full in the face, and Bunny gasped. It was here, too, that he first began to realize the height of the bridge above the river, rushing far below him. He stopped involuntarily.

"This ain't nothin' to what you'll get out at the end," Joe commented. "It's funny how the wind's always blowin' up here. You'd think it would stop sometimes, wouldn't you? And maybe it does, because we kind of get used to it, and don't pay no attention; but just the minute we stop to think about it there she is, a-blowin' fit to take your hair off! You'll find it a sight worse out at the end."

Their path became narrower at every step. Now, instead of a broad platform, the planks were put down more irregularly, and Bunny was forced to

step cautiously from one to the other. Directly below him he could see the huge rectangles that make up the units of a cantilever bridge, huge squares riveted together with diagonals running from corner to corner; but below these was the river, and it made Bunny dizzy to look down.

"How much farther is it to where I can find Mr. Hargrave?" he asked.

The boy pointed to the crane at the very end of the bridge.

"Dou you see that?" he asked. "Well, that's where you'll find Mr. Hargrave."

Bunny hesitated. He felt queer. The height, the singing wind, the rasping chatter of the riveters, the shrill whistle of the donkey-engine—all these things made him uncertain of himself. He dared not look down again; the swirling water, seemingly a mile below him, made his head go around, and gave him a full feeling in his throat. Then the thought came to him that this was a kind of nerve he had never met before. He looked at the boy ahead of him with wonder, noticing how entirely unconcerned he was, and began to ask himself if this was what his father meant when he talked of nerve.

Bunny decided it was; and, with a dogged shake of his head, clinched his teeth and went forward. He didn't intend to give up yet, at any rate; if that other boy could do it, so could he.

Shortly they came to another narrowing in the

path. There were only two planks now laid between the beams, and Bunny halted.

"What's the matter?" Joe called, looking over his shoulder. "Come on, there ain't no one to stop you now."

Bunny put out a foot. He was ashamed to let this boy get the better of him, but below there was nothing but the skeleton girders of the framework, no planking there at all, and if he fell he would drop straight to the river.

"Say," Joe began, coming back, "ain't you never been on a bridge before?"

"Not one that wasn't built," replied Bunny.

The boy chuckled. "That's what I thought," he announced, with a grin. "It's kind of funny at first, ain't it? Feel sort of all up in the air, eh?"

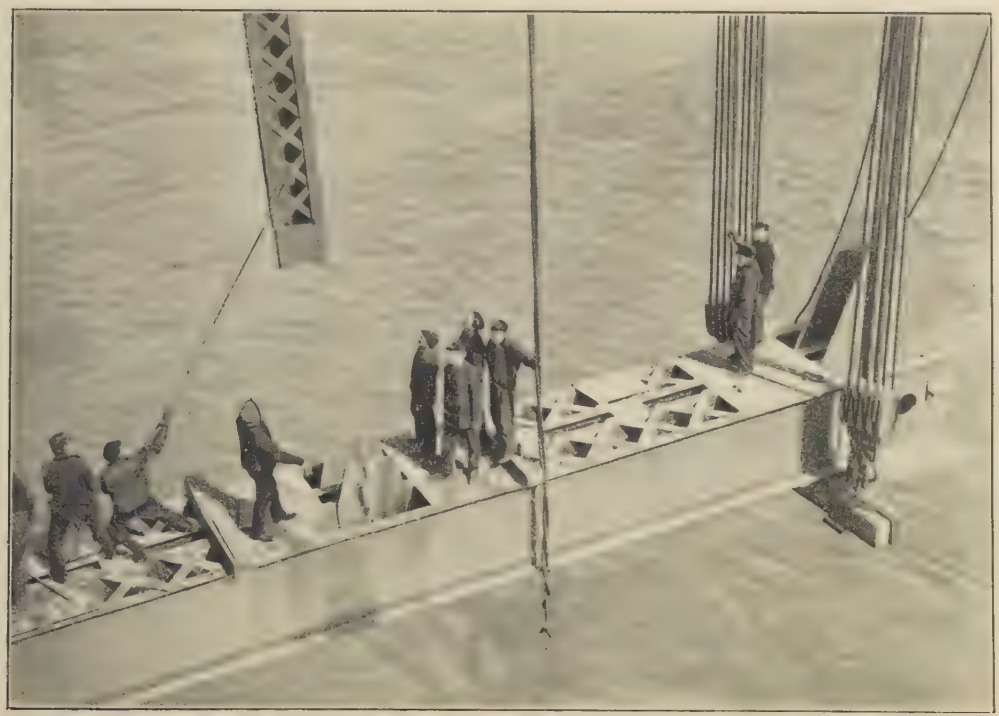
"Yes," answered Bunny, "that's just the way I feel."

"There ain't nothin' to be afraid of," the other went on, "and you'll get used to it pretty quick. I've known fellows who wouldn't have come this far —you couldn't have hired 'em to. Take your time and just look ahead of you. It's worse'n this farther on."

It may be that Joe said this last to encourage Bunny, but it did not have that effect.

"Can't you tell Mr. Hargrave I'm here, and would like to see him?" he asked.

"Well, I could," said Joe, slowly, "but I'd be fired for bringin' you out here. You've got to keep



"TALK OF NERVE! SAY, THAT'S NERVE FOR YOU!" SAID JOE

that dark. You come on, and sing out if you think you're goin' to fall—though you won't, if you make up your mind to it, and don't look down. That's the worst."

Bunny took a deep breath and walked out on the two planks, looking intently at the swinging crane before him. Joe moved just a little ahead, so that Bunny could catch hold of him if he felt he was going to lose his balance; but Bunny didn't. He gritted his teeth, and tried to forget that he was up in the air with nothing below him but a few girders that looked like spider-webs.

Presently they came to a little platform, or, rather, a square of planks covering one of the sections, and Bunny stopped to get his bearings again.

"Say," exclaimed Joe, with obvious admiration, "you're all right! I've been expectin' you to beat it long ago. I didn't think you'd come out this far, honest I didn't. There's lots of grown men that wouldn't have done it for a farm. But it's all in gettin' used to it. Kind of fresh up here, ain't it?"

The wind whistled about the steel framework, and Bunny shuddered. Joe walked to the edge of the planking and faced it, taking in deep breaths as he did so. "I tell you," he went on, "there's somethin' about this business that makes a man of you. But wait till you see 'em at the end! Some of the boys there are fittin' beams with nothin' between 'em and the water but the steel their standin' on. Talk of nerve! Say, that's nerve for you! But it

gets you some time, even though you are used to it. My dad used to do it, but he gave it up a year or so ago. I'll be at it some day—when I'm old enough, that is. Now they won't let me. I don't know as I'm so awful anxious for it yet."

Joe still stood at the very edge, and as he spoke he gave a little dance-step just to show how indifferent he was to mere height, and in so doing the plank he stood on turned and he lost his balance. For an instant he swayed wildly, throwing out his arms to maintain his equilibrium, swung toward the platform and brought his foot forward to regain his position, but as he put it down the plank turned again and dropped through into space below. The boy, with a cry, threw out his arms, striving to clutch anything to save himself, and Bunny saw the despair in his face for a moment before he disappeared.

With a gasp of fright Bunny dropped to his knees and looked into the open space below him. He expected, of course, that Joe was gone for good, but to his great surprise he saw him hanging limp on a girder. Evidently he had swung inward, and in so doing had fallen across the beam.

Bunny was too upset to think of anything. He only saw the boy hanging like a rag.

"Hello!" he called down. "Hello, Joe, are you hurt?" But there was no answer, and Bunny came to the correct conclusion that Joe was unconscious.

Bunny lifted himself to his knees and shouted, but against the roar of the wind and the noise of the

engine his voice made little headway. Again he called and waved his arms, but, so far as he could see, no one paid the slightest attention to him. There was not a man near. All the workers had been left behind except those at the extreme end of the bridge, and they could not hear him. Bunny decided that he must go to them at once, and was about to get to his feet when he looked down again at the limp figure below him.

With a pang he saw that its position had changed slightly. It was lower on one side than the other. As he watched he saw a movement of the legs, and again dropped to his knees.

"Hey, Joe!" he shouted, but there was no response. Then he saw the boy's body move, and realized, with a feeling of horror, that, while still unconscious, Joe was slowly slipping to his death.

Bunny's heart gave a great leap. How could he stay there and watch the boy drop without raising a hand to help him? But what could he do? It made him frightfully dizzy even to look down, and yet somehow he couldn't take his eyes away from that hanging form. What could he do?

He raised himself once more, and shouted with all his might. Then, twisting his legs about the pillar under the planking, he swung himself out and disappeared from the surface of the bridge.

XXI

HOLDING

BUNNY found himself grasping the braces running diagonally from the corners of the huge rectangles that make up the trusses, as they call the spans reaching from pier to pier. It was formed of long steel beams held together with crisscross pieces riveted to them, and made a sort of ladder which, under ordinary circumstances, he would have had no trouble climbing up or down. As it was, with his back to the river and thinking only of the boy helpless below him, he felt little anxiety for himself, or, rather, he didn't think of himself just then at all, but scrambled down with all the speed he could. At the middle, where the two braces intersect, he was forced to limb around one of them, and as he looked down over his shoulder he shuddered and grew dizzy as he realized the peril of his situation.

For an instant he faltered, clinging desperately to the rough metal, while the wind, coming in fierce gusts, whistled through the ironwork about him, and seemed bent upon tearing him from his insecure position.

Then he remembered Joe, and continued, half

climbing, half sliding, until he reached the lower girder, where his greatest task began. Here he was forced to straddle the girder, and although it was much wider than he would have expected, there was no way for him to avoid looking into the vast, empty space below him with the rushing river at the bottom. But he crawled slowly, keeping his eyes and his thoughts on the helpess boy in front of him, and at last reached his goal and gripped the limp body while he held himself on with his legs.

Having accomplished what he started out to do, Bunny immediately felt a reaction. There he was, suspended in the air, holding on for dear life, and a moment's relaxation would be fatal to himself and to the boy he held. Yet there was nothing he could do. He knew it was utterly impossible for him to carry or drag Joe up again. He simply couldn't do that, and the only thing left was to stay where he was until some one happened to see him from below, or, walking above, chanced to look down. It wasn't a safe place for any one, and for Bunny, who naturally disliked high places, and to whom such experiences were wholly uncommon, the position was one of extreme danger, and it needed all his courage to keep from becoming panic-stricken.

Once or twice he yelled furiously, but the hopelessness of that was apparent. The noises on the bridge and the wind beating against him made such effort futile. All he could do was to wait, hoping that some one would come and help them to safety.

How long he was there Bunny could never tell. It seemed hours, but presently he felt the body under his hands move convulsively, and Joe's legs began to draw up. This was distinctly alarming, for as it was Bunny had all he could do to hold the boy where he was without his struggling; now that he was evidently coming to his senses and trying to change his position, Bunny became desperate.

"Don't move!" he shouted, in his anxiety; "you'll fall off!" But Joe, only partially recovered, still tried to turn himself. Bunny edged nearer, and, throwing himself across the other's body, grasped the beam underneath and held on with all his force.

The boy groaned pitiably. The discomfort of his position was extreme, and the pain resulting from his fall began to make itself felt as he regained consciousness.

"Here, get off me!" he murmured. "I say, it ain't fair! You're smotherin' me!"

"Don't move!" Bunny commanded, in his ear. "I can't hold you if you do."

"Get off me, I'm smotherin'!" Joe repeated, and tried to turn; and then came a long-drawn "Oh!" as he opened his eyes and gazed into the space below him.

With an effort he twisted his neck and looked up. Then he remembered what had happened.

"Say," he began, weakly, "you needn't squeeze me so tight. I ain't goin' to fall. How did I happen to land here? I thought I was a gorner."

Bunny, realizing that Joe had fully returned to consciousness, straightened up, still holding on to him, however.

"Don't try to move," Bunny cautioned; "you'll drop if you do."

"I can't move," answered the other. "I'm all asleep except my head, and that hurts like fun. Gee!" he went on, more to himself, "I thought I was a gorner."

Now that Joe had come to his senses Bunny felt better. It was a comfort to have some one to talk to, at least; moreover, he felt that as soon as he had fully recovered, Joe would know how to get them out of their present predicament. For a while, however, Joe continued to mutter to himself over the strangeness of his escape.

"Why, there ain't one fellow in a hundred—no, nor a thousand—would have hit that beam and hung there. Say, how did I do it?"

"I don't know," answered Bunny. "I was surprised when I saw you hanging there."

"Gee!" Joe repeated again. "Gee! I thought I was a gorner, sure!"

Bunny began to tire of the strain of holding on, and wished Joe would try to think about getting back to the top of bridge.

"How are you feeling now?" he asked.

"Dizzy," answered Joe—"dizzy in my head and dreamy in my legs. Seems like there wasn't much in between—that is, nothin' to speak of. Say, but

I'm gettin' a rush of blood to the head hangin' down here. Gimme a hand and help me up."

This suggestion alarmed Bunny. He didn't believe Joe was in any condition to take care of himself yet, and he himself hadn't strength enough to do much in the way of helping.

"Hadn't you better stay where you are?" he suggested.

But Joe wasn't satisfied, and began to turn himself with a view to getting himself on the top of the beam.

"I'm gettin' a rush of blood to the head," he repeated, and began to lift himself up. "Here," he went on, "lean down and let me put an arm around your neck. Yes, that's it. Now hold on, and I'll be right in a jiffy."

With a quick twist of his body Joe came up into a sitting position, and threw one leg over the beam. Not minding the height, it was rather a simple performance for him; but the moment he was upright his head went to buzzing furiously, and he was forced to lay out on the beam till it stopped a little.

At last he raised his head and looked at Bunny.

"Say," he began, "what brought you down here?"

"You did," replied Bunny, "but I want to know how we are to get up again."

"Well," Joe went on, ignoring the question—"well, I didn't think you had the nerve, honest I didn't. What brought you down, anyway?"

"I saw you slipping off, and I couldn't make any

one hear, so I came down to hold you on. There wasn't anything else to do," Bunny replied.

"Gee!" exclaimed Joe. "I guess you saved me that time all right, and I'm much obliged to you; but I didn't think you had the nerve. Say, I know lots of men that wouldn't 'a' thought of doin' it—not much!"

"But how are we going to get back?" Bunny insisted, feeling that if something wasn't done soon he would be falling off himself. Every muscle in his body ached from holding on so tightly, and he knew he couldn't keep it up much longer.

"I don't know how I'm going to get up," said Joe. "I couldn't climb those cross-braces with my head goin' 'round this way, not for nothin'; but you can get up the way you came down."

"I can't go up backward," Bunny said, "and I wouldn't dare to turn around here. I'd fall off sure."

"Maybe you would," agreed Joe; "but don't hold on so tight. Forget you're a mile up in the air, and just sit natural. You'll find it's all right."

Bunny relaxed his grip somewhat just to try it, but that immediately made him think of the water far below and brought back the giddy feeling to his head.

"I have to hold on," he said, almost tearfully; and Joe, who knew he owed his life to the other, made no comment.

"It was different when you were hanging there in

danger of slipping off," Bunny explained; "but now you're all right I don't like it very much, and I wish we were up again on top."

"There ain't nothin' we can do but wait," Joe said, with conviction. "It ain't no use in the world to holler unless you hear some one walkin'. Some of 'em 'll be comin' in when the whistle blows. Say, you lie out on your stomick, you'll find it easier. I haven't got nothin' against you for bein' afraid. I'd be afraid, too, if I wasn't used to it. You've got nerve, all right."

Bunny followed this suggestion, and stretched himself out on the beam to wait. It was easier, as Joe said it would be, and he closed his eyes and tried not to think about anything.

How long the boys waited there they would be unable to say. Probably not more than half an hour at the most; but to Bunny, at any rate, it seemed an eternity. For the most part they were silent, but Joe, who was thinking of the part Bunny had played, couldn't help muttering, now and then: "I didn't think he'd have the nerve." And once he added: "But you can't always tell about these dude fellows."

When the whistle blew at twelve o'clock Bunny sat up. Now was the time to get help, and the two boys, listening as hard as they could, waited till they heard steps of approaching men above them. Then together they shouted with all the strength they could muster.

They were still shouting when a voice answered. They looked up, and saw one of the workmen gazing down at them.

"How did you get there?" he demanded, seeing from the white faces that they were in trouble.

"We fell, and we can't get up," said Joe, promptly. "You'll have to get a rope or something."

The man's face disappeared, and they heard him shouting. Presently they heard the murmur of other voices, and then several faces peered down at them.

"Hurry up!" Joe called. "We can't stay here forever, and my head hurts like fun."

"How did you get there?" some one demanded.

"I fell, and this young fellow came down to hold me on," Joe explained. "But don't be all day; we've been here hours already."

"You needn't tell me you fell," some one retorted; "there ain't no chance of your fallin' and landin' on the lower beams."

"I did it, anyhow," Joe returned, irritably. "But I'd rather argue it out with you when I get up there. Hustle along now, will you!"

"What is it, men?" they heard a voice asking, in a tone of authority.

"Couple of boys down there," came the answer. "One of 'em's Herrick's kid what helps the riveters. Don't know the other one."

Bunny looked up just as Hargrave gazed down.

"Bunny Reeves!" exclaimed the man, as he recog-

nized the white face held up to him. "How on earth did you get there?" But without waiting for an answer Hargrave began giving orders right and left, and in a minute a stout rope was lowered while one of the riveters came down to them.

"Put this rope under your arms," said the man to Bunny, "and we'll have you up in no time."

"But how can I get past you?" demanded Bunny, not liking this arrangement.

"I'll show you," the man answered, with a smile. He was standing upright on that narrow beam with as much unconcern as if he were on level ground. "Get to your feet first," he added.

Bunny, while the rope was made taut from above, stood up, the man holding his arm.

"Never you mind lookin' down at the water; it won't get away, you know. Look at the beam just like you was walkin' on Broadway. Steady, up there!" he called, and Bunny followed him. At the corner the man, grasping one of the braces above his head, swung himself into space, leaving a clear path for Bunny, who, gasping at this indifference to danger, stepped forward, and the shift in their positions was made.

A moment later, with the help of the rope from above, he was climbing up, and was soon safe.

It was not so easy to rescue Joe, for the boy was hurt more than was realized, and when he tried to stand he found he was very weak in his legs, and that his head would insist upon buzzing at a fearful rate.

It was necessary, therefore, to haul him up with the rope while the man who had climbed down steadied him from behind. At last, however, he was safe, too, and the two boys were surrounded by a circle of workmen awaiting an explanation.

XXII

UNFAIR INTERFERENCE

THERE was hardly a word said until both boys were in safety, and then Hargrave, looking sternly at Joe, sitting on an empty rivet-keg, began to question him.

"How did you happen to be down there?" he demanded.

"One of the planks turned on me, sir, and I fell," Joe explained. "I was comin' out to work—"

"You fell!" Hargrave interrupted, incredulously; and there was a murmur of astonishment from the ring of workmen.

"Yes, sir," answered Joe. "I must have hit my head on somethin', 'cause I didn't know nothin' till I come to and found this young feller holdin' me on. I thought I was a gorner!"

"I can't understand how it happened, but it was a lucky escape for you," Hargrave commented.

"Wouldn't have happened once in a thousand times," muttered one of the workmen.

"Why were you here?" Hargrave went on.

"I was comin' out to work, after havin' gone in to see if the new bolts had been ordered," Joe replied,

"Who sent you?"

"The man I'm workin' with. Bill Sanders."

Hargrave turned to one of the men, who nodded affirmatively.

"Well, Reeves, how did you get here?" Hargrave asked, turning to Bunny. His tone was not assuring, and the boy felt distinctly uncomfortable.

"I came to see you," he answered.

"To see me?" Hargrave asked, in surprise.

"Yes, about football," Bunny explained.

"Oh!" Hargrave snapped out the word angrily. "How did you get in? It is entirely against the rules to allow strangers on the bridge."

Bunny saw Joe gazing up at him beseechingly. It was evident that if Hargrave knew exactly how he had arrived there it would mean the dismissal of the boy.

"Well," Bunny began, "they told me at your office that you would be here, and as I had to get back to school this afternoon I came right out."

"But how did you get on the bridge? That is what I want to know," Hargrave insisted.

Joe looked at Bunny again in mute appeal, and Bunny understood.

"Oh," he returned, carelessly, "I came through a place between the fence and one of the houses."

"Why didn't you go to the office?" demanded Hargrave.

"I didn't think they would let me out to see you, and I just had to."

"Oh, that was it," said Hargrave. "We'll have to board up that place. Now tell me how you came to be on those lower girders with Joe."

"Well," Bunny explained, "I saw him fall, and when I looked down he was hanging there, just like a wet rag. I shouted, but no one heard me."

"Why didn't you come out to the end of the bridge, then?" asked Hargrave.

"Because he was slipping off, and I had to go down to hold him on."

"Good for the young feller!" said one of the workmen; and there was a murmur of approval about the group of grimy men.

Hargrave looked at Bunny for a moment, and then stretched out his hand.

"It was a very brave thing to have done, Reeves," he said, quietly. "I don't think most boys would have done it. Still, you have no right on this bridge, and you might have been killed, which would have been a very serious matter. How are you, Joe?" he ended, leaning down to the boy, who was still pale and feeling anything but vigorous.

"I guess I'm all right," he replied.

"You lay off for the rest of the day," Hargrave ordered. "Now come along with me to the office," he added, addressing Bunny.

"If you'll excuse me, sir," one of the workmen spoke up, stepping forward, "I just want to say a word to this young gentleman for savin' my boy's life. I'm Herrick," he went on, turning to Bunny.

"I'm Joe's father, and I want to thank you for what you did. You saved his life, no doubt of that, and I'm grateful to you." He held out a grimy hand and shook Bunny's heartily. "It's not every boy brought up like you've been that would have done it. Your father ought to be proud of you."

"I couldn't have done anything else," Bunny answered, "and I'm sure Joe would have done it for me."

"It's a proper lickin' I'd givin him if he hadn't," Herrick answered, with a threatening look at the white-faced boy on the rickety keg, "but that's different. He's grown up to it, as I might say, and don't think no more of walkin' around this kind of work than you do the street. But I've known grown men, many of 'em, that wouldn't have done what you did this day—no, not for any money on earth. I'm grateful, and you're a brave lad."

Before he left with Hargrave, Bunny said goodbye to Joe, who tried to stutter his gratitude, but really what he was most thankful for was the fact that Bunny hadn't told who had shown him the opening between the fence and the house. Bunny had kept him from a scolding or worse, and, boylike, that seemed a bigger thing to him than his having rescued him from death.

A little later Bunny faced Hargrave in a small private office in one of the temporary buildings at the entrance to the bridge.

"You were the last person I expected to see out

there," Hargrave began. "It was a fine thing to do, Reeves, but hereafter stay away from work of this kind. It's no place for people without experience. Did you come alone?"

"Doctor MacHenry came with me from Clinton, and I'm to meet him this afternoon. I didn't know you built bridges."

"We build anything," Hargrave explained. "It happens that we are putting up the ironwork for this bridge, but it might have been a sky-scraper."

"My father builds bridges," Bunny said, hesitatingly.

"Yes, I know that, too," Hargrave answered. "As a matter of fact, he's building this one."

"Why, I thought—" Bunny began.

"You thought I was building it?" Hargrave interrupted. "No, my firm looks after some of the ironwork, that's all. Your father designed the bridge, and is responsible for everything—from the piers to the painting of the electric lamps. He gives contracts for the various parts to different people."

"Oh, I see," replied Bunny. "And does he ever come to the bridge?"

"Every day," Hargrave assured him—"that is, every day when he's in New York. He's away a good deal of the time. Your father is a very busy man," said Hargrave.

"Yes, I suppose he is," returned Bunny, a trifle mournfully. "Anyway, I never see him."

There was silence for a few moments, and then

Bunny opened the subject that had brought him there.

"I wanted to see you about the football, Mr. Hargrave," he began.

"I don't see what there is to see me about," returned the other, with a distinct change of manner.

"Why, I want you to come and coach us," Bunny went on. "We've got a good team this year, and if you'll come and help I'm sure we can beat the Academy. The fellows are working hard, and all of us would like you to come as soon as you can. We've been hoping you would have been there before this."

"I can't see how you could have expected me to come," said Hargrave. "I want to see the team win, of course, and I'm always interested in what Clinton does; but—well, I don't like to go where there seems to be a desire to get some one else. I suppose you couldn't get any one else?" he added.

"I haven't tried," Bunny protested. "We all want you to come; in fact, I don't know what we'll do if you don't."

"You ought to have thought of that a good while ago," Hargrave answered, with a harsh little laugh.

"I always did think that way about it," Bunny tried to explain. "It was only some of the fellows that are always finding fault that suggested some one else. They didn't really mean it—you know how cranky fellows get—and now they're ready to do

anything to persuade you to come. Really, that's true, Mr. Hargrave. There isn't a fellow in the squad that doesn't want you."

Hargrave was silent for some time, and Bunny watched him apprehensively. He didn't know what was the matter, but he saw, of course, that Hargrave was different from the way he used to be. For one thing, he had always called him Bunny, like everybody else, and this change to the more formal "Reeves" was discouraging. He could understand Hargrave's resenting what the fellows had done, but he didn't see why he should make it a personal matter with him.

"I want to tell you candidly," Hargrave began at length, "that I don't believe you know exactly what you are doing. You may think I haven't been informed of all that went on at Clinton over this football-coach business, but I have. It all came back to me, as unpleasant things will, and I know your part in it perfectly. That is why I can't see any reason for your coming to me at this late date, unless you have failed in your attempts to secure another coach, and are willing to have me because you can't find any one else."

"But I never wanted any one else!" Bunny protested, vehemently.

"Then why did you resign the captaincy because the other fellows wanted me to coach?" Hargrave insisted, sternly. "Oh, I know all about it," he went on, without giving Bunny a chance to answer,

"I had a letter from Clinton, telling me you wouldn't play unless some on else coached."

"But that isn't true!" Bunny cut in.

Hargrave shook his head. "Don't tell me that," he answered, angrily. "I thought at first that there must be a mistake somewhere, but when I saw Tom Cary a few days later, and he told me that he had had a letter from you saying that you hadn't known I was coming back when you did know it all the time, I was forced to believe it was true. I don't want to seem soreheaded, but I do think some consideration might have been shown me, and I'm not willing to take up the coaching again simply because you can't get another man to do it; fact is, I didn't think you were that sort of a fellow, and I'm mighty sorry things have turned out this way."

"But that isn't the way it happened at all," Bunny declared, very much distressed. "Whoever wrote you that didn't tell the truth. It was just the other way around, and not at all the way you have it. I said I would resign unless you *did* come."

"Then how do you explain your letter to Cary?" Hargrave demanded, scornfully.

"Oh, that was just not to hurt his feelings," Bunny answered, earnestly. "You see, one of the boys had written to him saying that you weren't coming back, and asking if he would come and coach. Tom asked me about it. I didn't like to hurt his feelings by saying that I'd rather not have a coach than have him, so I just said you were

coming back, after all. He's a nice fellow, and—I hope you understand. But really and truly, Mr. Hargrave, it is exactly as I say, and when you wrote to me in that queer way as if we weren't friends any more, I didn't know what to do, and—and, please believe me, because I'd rather 'most anything happened than have you think I acted like that."

Bunny was so much in earnest that it was impossible for any one to doubt his word, and Hargrave saw that he had been intentionally misled.

"Bunny," he said, with a smile, "a boy who did what you did this morning wouldn't lie, that I'm sure of." He reached out and shook the boy's hand. "I'm glad, mighty glad, to find out that I was wrong! Let's forget it now, and go to lunch."

"I want to know who wrote that letter." Bunny's tone was dogged.

"I think I won't tell you," Hargrave replied. "It would only make trouble."

"But I want to know," Bunny persisted. "Was it Wallace?"

"No," Hargrave answered, "it wasn't Wallace nor any other football man. That much I'll tell you; but it wouldn't do you any good to know that there is one boy in the school who has lied and is a coward."

Bunny was forced to be satisfied with this, but he hadn't forgotten the main issue.

"Then you'll coach?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Hargrave, with a nod, "yes,

for you know, Bunny, the fact is I'm anxious to be at it again. I was disappointed to think I wasn't going to have the chance."

"Good! Good! I *am* glad!" Bunny exclaimed, with enthusiasm. "When will you come down?"

"I'll turn up the last of the week," Hargrave promised. "Now we'd better go to lunch. We've only a shack out there, and you won't find it at all like Delmonico's, but they make a fine oyster stew, and, anyway, it's the best we can get."

"I don't care what it is," replied Bunny, laughing. "I'm as hungry as a bear, and could eat anything. I'm so glad you're coming!"

XXIII

THE OFFICIALS CONFER

THE first question Doctor MacHenry asked Bunny, when they met at the station, was whether or not he had seen his father.

"I didn't have time," replied Bunny. "You see, sir, I had to go out to the bridge to see Mr. Hargrave." And then he told the doctor how far he had to travel to find the place, but he did not say a word about his experience on the bridge in connection with the rescue of Joe. The doctor understood, and although he expressed his regret, he appreciated that under the circumstances it was impossible.

"I am glad you persuaded Hargrave to come back," said the doctor. "He's a fine fellow, and I am always sure when he is there that he will take good care of you boys. I don't know whether he's a first-class football coach or not, but I do know he's a fine fellow."

"Isn't he!" exclaimed Bunny, with enthusiasm. "And he is a good coach, too. That I'm sure of."

"From what I've heard I should judge you thought so," replied the doctor, with a little chuckle.

"You seem to hear most things, sir, don't you?" said Bunny, after a moment. "I often wonder who tells you."

The doctor laughed outright.

"I don't have to be told everything in so many words," he explained. "When you have been looking after a lot of boys for a great many years, as I have, you begin to know what is going on, and can put two and two together with tolerable accuracy. Don't get a notion that some one is running to me with tales. I haven't found that necessary to maintain school discipline, I'm glad to say. We masters overhear a good deal that you boys talk about, and just because we do not happen to take any notice of it doesn't mean that we are not aware of what takes place."

"I wonder if you know everything?" asked Bunny, rather solemnly, after a pause.

Again the doctor laughed.

"What are you thinking of now?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing much," answered Bunny, "only I was wondering, that's all."

"You can count on my knowing most things, my boy," returned the doctor. "For instance, I was informed of how you acted in this case of Hargrave. And I must say I was glad that, even though you gave up the captaincy, you were still willing to play. I was a little worried about that, I admit."

"Did you really think I wouldn't play, sir?" asked Bunny.

"I thought of the possibility," answered the doctor.

"I can't understand why," Bunny went on. "There were some of the boys thought the same thing. Boys do get such funny ideas sometimes."

Bunny made this remark with such a grown-up air that the doctor could not hide a smile.

"What are you thinking of?" he asked.

"About the Military Academy," Bunny answered. "You know, I've always thought that they weren't nice fellows at all. And so did Bob Struthers, and all the rest of us. Well, sir, I've found out that the Academy thinks the same of us! Don't you think that's funny, sir?"

"That comes of your football and athletics generally," replied the doctor, "and it's a great mistake."

"Yes, I think so, too," Bunny agreed. "You see, Bob and I met Ted Halliday at Blue Point this summer. He's the captain of the Academy team, and he's one of the nicest fellows I ever knew. He isn't at all the way I supposed he was. We're most intimate friends now—he and I and Bob Struthers."

"I am very glad to hear it," returned the doctor. "I've never liked this attitude the two schools have toward each other. It's very silly—very silly indeed. The idea you boys have that all your rivals are different from you is ridiculous."

"That's what Bob and I have been thinking," Bunny went on. "I've talked to a lot of the fel-

lows since we've been back, and so has Bob; but no one believes us, and I wish I could do something to show them that we're right. I can't see why the two schools can't be friendly, even if they do play against each other. As it is, it is more like a battle than anything else. Of course, I want to beat the Academy awfully, and I'm going to do everything I can to win, but when the game is over I don't see why we can't be friends."

"I agree with you entirely," replied the doctor.

"I've been puzzling over it a lot," Bunny continued, "but there doesn't seem to be anything to do. I've thought we might take the Academy boys up to our rooms after the game and show them 'round generally, but I don't believe they'd go."

"No, I don't believe they would," replied the doctor.

Just then Bunny had an inspiration, and became a little excited over it.

"Oh, doctor," he exclaimed, "have I any of the money left that father sent for me when I went to the sea-shore?"

"I can't tell till I see my books," the doctor replied. "Why do you want to know?"

"Because," Bunny went on, "I think if I had money enough it would be fine to give the two teams a dinner after the game — just the football boys; then they would get acquainted with each other. What do you think, sir?"

"A fine idea," replied the doctor, at once—"a fine

idea. That ought to show the Academy that *we* mean to be friendly, at any rate."

"Then, sir," Bunny cried, delightedly, "I'll do it! Father always gives me all the money I want, and I think he wouldn't mind if you wrote and explained to him."

"Oh, I'll see that the money is provided for the dinner," said the doctor.

Bunny's face fell. "Really, sir, I'd like to do it all myself," he pleaded. "It wouldn't be quite the same if you paid for it, sir; and even if there isn't money enough from this summer, I'm sure father would let me have it."

The doctor thought for a good while over this, and came to the conclusion that, after all, the money was a small part of it, and he knew that Mr. Reeves would be the last one to refuse necessary financial aid to allow the boy to carry it out himself.

"It seems to me," the doctor said, presently, "that if every boy on our team could pay a share for the dinner it might be better yet. What do you say to that?"

"It would be nice," admitted Bunny, without much enthusiasm, however, "only I don't believe the fellows would want to. You see, sir, a thing like this has to be started. Next year they'll do it that way, sure, but now—"

"I believe you are right," the doctor said, as Bunny hesitated. "You shall give the dinner, and I will write your father. Even though you have the

money left from this summer, I think he should know how it is to be spent. But I don't anticipate any objection from him; in fact, I'm sure he will agree, so go ahead with your arrangements. It is your idea, and I shall leave the whole matter to you."

"Thank you, sir," replied Bunny. "I think we can have it at the hotel, and I'll write to Ted Halliday and see how he likes the idea. I don't know why it didn't occur to me before."

Bunny had a good deal to tell Bob Struthers that night, and it must be confessed that lessons were neglected while Bunny described his adventures and answered Bob's endless questions.

"You certainly have all the fun!" Bob said, enviously. "I don't see how you do it."

"Neither do I," admitted Bunny, "and I'm not at all sure I like it. Certainly it wasn't any fun sitting out on that bridge this morning. I was 'most scared to death."

"I should think you would have been," agreed Bob.

Then they talked of the dinner, and Bob was quite as enthusiastic as Bunny over it, and promised to help, though he wouldn't be there himself.

"It makes me want to play football," said Bob, regretfully. "I wish I wasn't so long."

That same evening Doctor MacHenry wrote to Mr. Reeves. He explained that Bunny wanted to give a dinner to the visiting football team from the

Military Academy after the annual game, and said that although he was quite willing to appropriate the money himself, he felt that to have the matter come from the boys would have a much better effect. Moreover, he thought that, as it was Bunny's suggestion, the boy should be permitted to carry it through as he had planned. Continuing, the doctor wrote:

"You have been so liberal in the past that I feel certain you will have no objection to offer on the score of expense, and on that assumption I have told Percival that he might rely on your co-operation.

"Cannot you pay us a little visit at the time of this football game? These athletic meets give an excuse, at least, for a reunion of my old boys, in whose welfare I cannot help having a more than passing interest.

"Your boy will be delighted to see you, as will your old master, JOHN MACHENRY."

To this letter Mr. Reeves wrote a prompt reply:

"I concur heartily in the plan for the football dinner, and shall feel the money well spent if it mitigates in any way the silly enmity between the two schools. Another way to further this same idea has occurred to me which I am sure will meet with your approval. I shall discuss it with you at the time of the game, for I have decided to accept your suggestion to pay you a visit on that day.

"I cannot help being glad of Percival's interest in this dinner, but it occurs to me that the sort of a boy who would have the stuff in him to carry on my work would

not be thinking of the social end of the matter. I admit I don't know much about him. I remember, as a little boy, he seemed very much afraid of the dark and cried during thunder-storms, which might, of course, be the result of his nurse's influence.

"I shall look forward to seeing you again, and in the mean time please accept my hearty thanks for your interest in my son. Always sincerely, your old pupil,

"D. H. Reeves."

Doctor MacHenry sat motionless for some minutes after reading this letter.

"Strange how a mistaken fancy will fasten itself upon one," he murmured, half aloud. "He cannot rid himself of the idea that his son hasn't any 'nerve,' as he would call it. Strange—very strange indeed! But some day, perhaps, he'll learn better, and then—" The old gentleman nodded, and put the letter carefully away.

XXIV

OFF SIDE

HARGRAVE came to Clinton on the day he was expected, and even he seemed pleased with the first practice he saw. Undoubtedly the boys were more than anxious to show him that, if they had been critical, they at least did not mean to let him have the excuse of saying they would not do as he wanted them. They worked as they had never worked before, and after it was over Billy Bryan took Hargrave aside.

"They're doing fine, aren't they?" he said, confidentially.

"They certainly are," Hargrave agreed.

"Well, I'll tell you why," Billy went on. "Come over here and see it," and Billy lead him to the steam-box.

"That's what's doing it," he declared, after explaining the affair. "And you ought to see 'em when they come out of it—as red as lobsters, every one of 'em! It's fine, fine! We should have had it years ago. And say, Mr. Hargrave, have you seen the doctor?"

"Not yet," was the reply.

"When you see him, you'll be surprised," Billy continued. "He's failing—sure he is; and now that you're here, see if you can't get him to come and try the steam-box. It 'll do him a world of good. I've been after him, but he won't listen to me. Says I'm an old fool, and need it myself. Great joker, the doctor. You'll try, won't you, Mr. Hargrave?"

Hargrave promised, and went away chuckling.

From then on the practice went ahead with uninterrupted spirit. Some days, of course, were better than others, as is always the case, but on the whole there was little to complain of. All in all, they played fairly good football. The line worked especially well in the centre, which said much for Walters and Thornton, who, since Hargrave came, showed themselves as enthusiastic as any of the boys who had been in the school longer. Walters in particular developed rapidly into a fine guard, and was the mainstay of the centre of the line. Crawford, at tackle, did as well as he could, but he was slow—there was no doubt of that; still, he was the best man there was for the place, and he did seem to be trying.

Behind the line things were not going so well. Bunny and Wallace, at halves, were all right, but the others were far from satisfactory. Curtis, who played at full, was too light to make the interference that was necessary; while Blair, at quarter, didn't seem to start quickly enough, and consequently there was a good deal of fumbling.

"I don't know what we can do," Bunny com-

plained to Hargrave one evening, as the latter expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the quarter was playing. "Unless I wait an instant to get the ball there is usually a fumble. Blair can't seem to get started fast enough, and I know Wallace has the same trouble."

"Is there any one else?" asked Hargrave. He had only been there a few days then.

"No, there isn't," Bunny answered. "That's just the trouble. There's Hillton, but he doesn't seem to care about playing. I think his father doesn't want him to play, although he doesn't like to say so."

"Then we won't bother him about it," Hargrave answered, positively. "I won't urge a boy to play if his parents are opposed to it. How would you like to try quarter?"

"I had thought of it," Bunny said; "but, you know, Wallace and I work pretty well together, and I hate to spoil that combination."

"Well, suppose we try it anyway, and see how it turns out," suggested the coach.

This change was a help as far as the quarter-back position was concerned, but left a weak place at half. Wallace grumbled, not without reason, that they lost more than they gained, and Bunny went back to his old position.

Then the full-back was another source of worry, so that there was plenty of work to do, and every day brought its problems.

In the mean time Bunny had written to Ted Halliday about the dinner after the game. Ted answered at once, saying that he thought it would be a fine thing, and he hoped the fellows would like the idea. At any rate, he would talk it over and see. The Clinton boys, to whom Bunny had spoken of it, expressed different views, although all seemed to be a little doubtful of having anything to do with the Academy fellows, except to beat them.

"They'll think we're afraid of them," Wallace declared. "Besides, who wants to have anything to do with a crowd like that?"

"They say Halliday is the worst slugger that ever played football," said Curtis, who was by way of being rather inclined to use his fists himself.

"Well, I'm sure he isn't," said Bunny. "I knew him all summer, and he's one of the nicest fellows I ever met."

"I guess he's different in the summer, then," said Wallace.

All in all, the boys seemed dubious of Bunny's idea of entertaining the Academy team, but they were willing enough that the dinner should be given as an experiment, anyway.

As the season advanced and the two teams began playing practice games, the interest became more and more intense. Clinton won and so did Academy, but a comparison of their scores against the same schools showed that Academy was the stronger. This fact began to discourage Clinton a little, and

Hargrave had hard work to keep their spirits up.

"It's early in the season yet," he told Bunny, who came to him much worried. "Don't begin to think you're beaten already."

"I don't think so," said Bunny, "but we aren't improving the way we should. We're not playing any better than we were two weeks ago, and I don't see what's the matter."

Nor were Bunny and Hargrave the only ones who discussed these chances. Walters and Thornton had a little plan of their own, and one afternoon in the middle of the week they begged to be let off from practice because they had some "business to attend to," so they said. At first Hargrave was not going to permit it, but they seemed so very earnest and had been working so well that finally he gave his consent.

Walters, who was rather intimate with Wallace, told him he was going to make it certain that Clinton would beat the Academy; but when the latter asked how he was going to do it, Walters winked and said he would find out in good time.

Some of the boys saw Walters and Thornton get into an automobile and go off in the direction of the Academy, which was situated in a little town about ten miles from Clinton; but they thought nothing about it, nor did any one else till later.

What they did was not disclosed till that night, when, upon their return, they went at once to

Bunny's room, and found him and Bob busy with lessons.

"I've got them," said Walters, as he came in. "Thornton and I laid on the ground in the long grass and took them down as fast as they called them out. They're all here, and we've got the Academy just where we want them. They've a good team all right, too."

"What have you?" asked Bunny, who had no notion of what this was all about.

"I've got the Academy's signals right here," announced Walters, triumphantly; "every one of them, with the plays. And the best of it is they haven't an idea we have them. All we have to do now is to study these signals and they're beaten." And Walters took a number of papers out of his pocket and laid them on the table.

"Gee!" exclaimed Bob Struthers, excitedly. "How did you do it?"

"Well," began Walters, enjoying the sensation he was making, "I wanted to make this game a certainty, and I've been thinking about it a good deal, so it struck me that it wouldn't be much of a trick to get their signals, especially as none of the fellows there know either of us. So we hired an auto and went over. Why, we could have gone anywhere! I never saw such an innocent lot of chumps. Any one could have gotten those signals without half trying if they had any nerve. Anyway, here they are all right, and I guess there will be a sur-

prise in store for the Academy when they come over."

Bunny was looking at the papers before him, noting the numbers and the plays they indicated. With his team in possession of that knowledge it looked certain that they would win. For a few minutes he could not help feeling that Walters had really done something worth while, but somehow he couldn't be very enthusiastic.

"You don't seem to think much of it," Walters said, apparently hurt at Bunny's coolness.

"I don't know about it," Bunny replied, hesitatingly. "It doesn't seem quite square, does it?"

"I don't see why not," returned Walters and Thornton, in a breath.

"They would do it if they had the chance, fast enough; besides, all's fair in love and war," the former asserted, irritably. "You mustn't think that football is ring-around-a-rosy."

"I don't see anything the matter with it," Bob said, rather ashamed of his room-mate's quixotic scruples. "We're not babies, and if they didn't want their signals known they ought to have seen that no one got them."

"All the colleges try to get the other teams' signals if they can, and never think a thing of it," asserted Walters. "You'll find that they're mighty careful to keep strangers away from the field. And what do you suppose they have secret practice for?"

"Oh, that's for new plays," said Bunny, on the defensive.

"Don't you believe it," asserted Thornton. "My brother, who is at Yale, said that they wouldn't write the signals for fear some one would lose the paper with them on. Every man on the team has to learn them by being told. And he says they have men on the watch to keep people away. That shows what the colleges do, all right."

"Well, I don't know," said Bunny. "Of course, it would give us a big advantage. We'd know just where the play was going, and could put our defence in front of it."

"Yes, and they would be so rattled if they saw we knew just what they were going to do that they couldn't play for beans. We've got the Academy licked right now with those little signals there."

"Yes, I think we have," agreed Bunny, "but I'm not sure we ought to use them."

"Oh, you make me tired!" said Walters, angrily.

"Me too!" said Thornton.

"Here we've gone to all this trouble," Walters went on, "to get the signals, and now you don't know whether we ought to use them. I begin to think you don't want to win that game with Academy."

"Oh, you don't think that," said Bunny, with a laugh; "that's silly. I do want to beat them, but I don't know whether it would be any fun to win after we knew all their signals. Why, they couldn't get a play off without our knowing exactly where the

ball was going. We ought to be able to beat 'most any team with an advantage like that."

"Do you want them to beat you?" demanded Walters. "You say you don't, so I suppose you want to beat them. Well, there you are! All you have to do is to learn those signals. It won't take long."

"That's right!" Thornton added.

"I'll think it over," answered Bunny. "There isn't any hurry about it, because we wouldn't want the fellows to know it until a week or so before the game. I'll keep these things and think it over."

"I guess you'll find it's all right to use them," said Walters.

"I guess so, too," echoed Thornton, as they both went out.

"Maybe I will," said Bunny. "We'll see."

"It strikes me you're rather particular, Bunny," said Bob, after the others had gone. "I don't see anything the matter with using those signals. Walters and Thornton deserve a lot of credit for thinking of it."

"Maybe they do," said Bunny, "only—"

"Oh, I know what you're going to say," Bob cut in—"that it isn't just square, and all that. Well, perhaps it isn't if you look at it in a Sunday-school way; but this is football, and we want to win."

"I'm going to think about it," said Bunny, and he went to bed without another word on the subject.

XXV

ON SIDE

BUNNY didn't go to sleep very fast that night. He was thinking hard over the problem of what he ought to do with these signals that Walters and Thornton had brought from the Academy. He tried to speculate on how he would feel if the matter had been reversed—if Ted had their signals instead of his having theirs. Bunny wasn't a goody-goody boy by any means, and he wanted, more than anything else in the world, to win that game from the Academy, but somehow he felt that to beat them by knowing their signals would take away all the pleasure of winning.

On the other hand, he had heard that this sort of thing was done at the colleges, and that, as Walters had said, "All was fair in love and war," so why not take advantage of his opponents' carelessness?

Bunny hadn't made up his mind when he went to sleep that night, and most of the next day was still given to puzzling over the problem, so that his lessons suffered. Moreover, he knew that there would be much unfavorable criticism on the part of many of the boys on the team if he did not use them.

In the morning's mail Bunny received a letter from Ted Halliday, which he opened eagerly:

"Dear Bunny,—I don't know what is the matter with our fellows over here, but they really don't seem to want to come to your dinner. I've talked with them a lot, and I want to go myself, and believe, as you do, that it's all silly nonsense to think we're mortal enemies just because we go to different schools; but over here they can't seem to see it that way, and have an idea it's some trick or other on the part of Clinton. I can't understand how they reason it out, but that's the way they feel, and so I'm letting you know. I've done all I can, and called them everything I can think of, but they say 'No,' and insist it's some scheme of yours to get the best of us. Of course, I know there is nothing in that, and we are going to beat you, dinner or no dinner, remember that, young man; but I expect we'll know we've been playing football by the time the game is over. Well, good-bye, I must go to work on my Cæsar, which I hate, but our Latin master doesn't seem to take that into consideration. Inconsiderate old chap. Sorry about the dinner, but I guess it's no go. Best to Bob. Your particular enemy on the football field,

"T. H. Halliday."

Bunny was sincerely disappointed. Somehow he had looked forward to that dinner with no small degree of pleasure, and couldn't see any reason why there should be any objection to it. And yet he realized that Ted could do little in the matter, for even the Clinton team were far from enthusiastic over it, and in all probability if they lost the game

they would turn up missing at the dinner. Perhaps, after all, it was just as well that the dinner was off. He would have liked it, but except for Ted no one else seemed at all in favor of it. So he made up his mind to give up the idea, but the matter of the signals was not so easily disposed of.

That had to be decided, and the longer he put it off the harder it became for him to make up his mind.

While he was still pondering about it he saw Walters, and, running down, called him to stop.

"I've been thinking of those signals," he began, "and I don't know exactly what to do about them."

"Well, there's only one thing to do," retorted Walters. "If you want to win the game, use them. If you don't want to win it, why, keep quiet about it; only I think the fellows will be pretty sore if they find out after they have lost that they might have won if you hadn't been so fussy."

"What makes you so sure they will win?" asked Bunny.

"I saw them practising," Walters answered. "They've got a good team, let me tell you. I think they'd make a college eleven hustle. They're bigger fellows than we are, too. And, anyway, Bunny, you can bet if they had our signals they would use them fast enough. Maybe they have ours, for all you can tell. They might have gotten them as easy as we got theirs."

"But if we did use their signals and beat them,

there wouldn't be much satisfaction in it," Bunny argued, persistently.

"Oh, wouldn't there, though?" returned Walters. "Everybody would say we were mighty foxy to get their signals, and that they were dumb to let us do it. Besides, people would only half believe it. Pretty nearly every team that's beaten claims that the other team knew its signals, and it doesn't make any difference, does it? I tell you, the thing is to win! That's what we play for, and that's what the school expects us to do. Win any way you can, so you win! I know what I'm talking about."

"Yes, I suppose that's so," agreed Bunny. "If you win you're all right, and if you lose—"

"Why, nobody has any use for you," Walters finished for him.

"All the same it doesn't seem fair," Bunny insisted. "Why, they couldn't do anything if we knew all their signals!"

"Who wants them to do anything?" demanded Walters. "You talk as if you wouldn't be satisfied unless they beat us."

"That isn't what I mean at all," protested Bunny. "Of course I want to win, but it would be a lot more satisfaction to beat them without any such advantage over them."

"I can see there's no use arguing with you about it," Walters concluded. "But I tell you this now: if you don't use those signals of theirs, you can make up your mind to take a good beating when we

play. Another thing: neither the fellows on the team nor the school in general will be pleased to have you throw the game away."

Bunny returned to his room still perplexed. There was no doubt that he wanted to win that game with the Academy; also, there was no doubt that he was the only one who seemed to think that there was anything underhand in using the signals of another team. And it was no matter to take to Doctor MacHenry or Hargrave. He knew, as did all the boys, exactly what those two would say. They would not hesitate an instant to tell him to have nothing to do with it, and to destroy the signals at once. But they were men, and Bunny was old enough to know that they always did things in a certain way and talked about "precedents" and "ideals," that neither Bunny nor the other boys had much understanding of. That was the grown-up attitude, the professor's way of looking at it, and Bunny was no more inclined to that than Walters or any of the other fellows. It didn't seem square to Bunny, that was all there was to it, and he knew that if the Academy had the Clinton signals he wouldn't think it was fair, no matter what any college team might or might not have done. He wasn't thinking of morals, or ideals, or anything of that kind. He was just as much of a boy as any of his companions in the school, and he wanted to win; but this signal business—somehow that was different.

When Bob Struthers came in Bunny took the subject up with him again.

"Yes," answered Bob, "I've been thinking of it, and I haven't changed my mind. I can't see that there is any reason why you shouldn't use them. Ted Halliday ought to be more careful to see that we didn't get his signals. It was up to him, I think."

"Now see here," Bunny began; "suppose we had thought of going over there and stealing up in the long grass to get them? Suppose, instead of Walters and Thornton, *we* had been the ones, how would you have felt about it? Would you have sneaked around, pretending to be innocent, and when no one was looking put down those signals and the plays as they were called off?"

"That's different," Bob returned, hesitatingly. "You've got the signals, and it isn't any of your affair how they were gotten."

"Don't you believe it isn't any of my affair," said Bunny, positively. "If I'm willing to use them I ought to be willing to have stolen them, for that's what it is. And I know you wouldn't have gone over there after them."

"No, I wouldn't," Bob admitted. "And when you put it that way it does seem different somehow. But then, Bunny, everybody does it."

"Maybe they do," Bunny agreed — "maybe they do; but I don't think it's square, and, to tell you the truth, I wouldn't feel like shaking hands with Ted Halliday afterward."

Bob Struthers hesitated for a long time, and the two argued back and forth till finally he gave in.

"I guess you're right, after all, Bunny," he said. "It does seem a mean sort of business if you look at it the right way, but I think the fellows will be sore if we lose."

"I'm not worrying about that yet," Bunny returned, sitting down at his desk. "I'm going to write to Ted now, and have it off my mind. Then things can happen if they like. I won't feel badly about it—though," he added, wistfully, "I do want to win that game."

Bunny told Ted that he was sorry about the dinner, and he wished there was some way it could be fixed up, but there didn't seem to be, and the best thing to do was to forget it. He went on:

"Now I want to tell you about the enclosed papers. I guess you can tell what they are, all right, when you see them. They were given to me yesterday, and I'm sending them to you. It doesn't make any difference who brought them to me, and I've been thinking about them a good deal since they came. But if we can't beat you without knowing your signals, I don't want to beat you at all, so here they are. There may be two or three fellows on our team that have seen them, so you'd better change your system —and hereafter keep a better lookout for strangers. I see you are pretty sure you are going to beat us. Well, when you get here you'll find it altogether different, my boy, and when the game is over you can say that little piece about pride going before a fall or something like that.

We're after you, Teddy, and we aren't scared a bit. Bob says you are a chump never to write to him, but don't let his growls influence you. He's by way of being a sore-head anyway. So long, and get all the fun you can out of your football before you meet Clinton.

"Your BUNNY."

Once he had settled the matter, Bunny felt better. It was done, and there could be no further argument about it, though he expected an outburst of indignation when he told Walters. And in a way he felt rather sorry about it, for he realized that Walters and Thornton had done what they thought was for the good of the team, and had tried to show their interest. Also, he feared that, as a result of his action, the two might stop playing altogether; but he couldn't help that, though it did worry him.

He spoke to Walters about it as soon as he saw him on the field that afternoon. The two walked off from the rest of the fellows so no one could overhear the conversation, and Bunny was rather surprised to find that the other took his announcement so well.

"I thought you were going to do it," Walters said. "I can't help believing you have thrown away your chance to win the game, but you're captain and can do what you think is right. It's foolish, but I haven't forgotten about that smoking business, and I'm with you whatever happens."

"Good!" said Bunny. "I don't want you to

think I don't appreciate what you did. I know it was for the team, and that's all right; but, honestly, I didn't think it was fair."

"Oh, well, if you are going to talk like a prof. of course it isn't fair."

"I don't mean that I'm better than any one else," Bunny protested. "You know what I'm driving at as well as I do, only it isn't easy to explain, and it does sound as if I was too good to keep. But, on the square, I'm sure it was better to send them back."

"All right," said Walters, "we'll say no more about it. I'll play just as hard as ever I can, and if we lose—well, we lose, that's all."

"We will have done the best we could, anyway," said Bunny.

"We'll have to," said Walters, and that ended the matter for the time being.

Two days later Bunny received a letter from Ted Halliday that read as follows:

"My Dear Bunny,—You're a brick to send back those signals. The only thing I can see to do is for us to work harder to beat you, just to show you how really we appreciate your being so square. Seriously, it was mighty decent, and all of us over here think it was fine. I had the fellows together after practice the day your letter came, and when I told them about it, they all voted to accept your dinner if the invitation was still open. I said I thought it was, and they decided they'd be glad to come, win or lose, so altogether we're beginning to find out that Clinton

isn't so bad as we thought it was. If you let us take back our regrets, then we'll accept with pleasure."

"What is it?" asked Bob Struthers, as Bunny danced about the room joyfully.

"We're going to have that dinner after all!" was the answer.

XXVI

PLAY

AS the day for the Clinton-Academy game approached, the excitement in both schools increased, and there was little else talked of. It had become a general impression that the game was to be a particularly close one, for although in the beginning of the season Academy seemed to have the best of it, Clinton had gradually improved in its playing till it was admitted by the most ardent Academy partisan that it would be a hard game to win. Every one at Clinton was enthusiastic, and it was all Hargrave and Tom Cary, who had come to coach the centre men, could do to keep down the feeling of confidence that seemed to possess the team. For one reason or another the boys had gotten it into their heads that they were sure to win, and this was not the best way to start into a close contest. Bunny also did his best to counteract this feeling, and the three succeeded to an extent.

It would have been quite as bad, perhaps worse, if the boys had been sure that they would be defeated.

Billy Bryan, still attributing all their success to the

steam-box, had the boys in splendid condition for the contest, and the game promised to be the most exciting that had been played between the schools for years.

Of course, neither Hargrave nor Bunny were satisfied with the team. It never happens that either coach or captain is satisfied, and that is bound to be so, for they know the faults as no one else can know them, and it is natural that they should think most of the weak places. Blair, at quarter, still left much to be desired, as did Curtis, at full; but they had improved, and certainly were trying as hard as they knew how. The Clinton line was good. There was no doubt of that. From end to end the boys played hard and fast, so Hargrave was satisfied that the defence would be something to be proud of. Bunny and Wallace were both excellent tacklers, so that the second line of defence would not fail at the ends, at least, and, after all, Blair was better in that department of the game than anywhere else. Curtis, at full, was an uncertain quantity, however, and if Academy did get through, the chances were that Curtis would do little to stop the runner on his way to the goal-line. However, all in all, the defence was satisfactory.

For the offence there was not as much confidence on the part of the coach. A weak quarter usually means a weak back field, and, in spite of Bunny and Wallace, who were splendid halves, the slowness of Blair weakened the offence proportionately.

The night before the game Bunny and Hargrave had a long talk together, and went over all the possibilities that might arise during the game. Hargrave would suggest certain conditions, both offensive and defensive, and ask Bunny how he proposed to get out of them—what signals he would give when the ball was in such and such a situation on the first, second, or third down. Then, after Bunny had said what he would do, they discussed it thoroughly till the captain felt that he knew how to meet any condition that might arise.

"The only thing that worries me," Hargrave said, at the end of their conversation, "is what we are going to do if anything happens to Blair."

"That's what worries me, too," Bunny replied.

"Well, I hope nothing will happen; but if he's hurt I don't see anything for it but to have you go into quarter on offence and let Goddard go to half. I don't like that arrangement any more than you do, but I can't see anything else to be done."

"But I'm such a bum quarter," said Bunny, with heartfelt regret.

"Yes, you are," agreed Hargrave; "but we won't borrow trouble. By-the-way, I heard a rumor that you had the signals of the Academy team."

Bunny started, and looked at Hargrave to see what was coming. It was the first word he had heard of those signals for some time.

"No, I haven't them," said Bunny, truthfully.

"Well, I happened to hear that you had them,"

Hargrave went on, as he rose to go. "I don't believe much in that sort of thing, you know. I've heard of colleges that stole the signals of other teams, but I never met any of them. There's a good deal of talk about it; but let me tell you, Bunny, it isn't done. Certainly not by any of the colleges I've ever come into contact with, and I've played against all the big ones. First of all, it isn't square, and, more than that, it doesn't pay. The fellow who is listening to the other team's signals isn't playing the game. In other words, it's poor football. I heard that you had given the Academy signals back to their captain. I'm glad you did it. It wouldn't have paid to win a game that way."

"Where did you find that out?" asked Bunny, rather bewildered.

"I've known it for a good while," Hargrave said. "It doesn't matter where the information came from, but we older fellows hear most of the things that are going on. By-the-way, your friend Joe, the riveter's helper on the bridge, has been asking about you. He's coming to the game."

"Good!" cried Bunny. "Do you know that fellow set me thinking a good deal? Seems to me we're a rather lucky bunch, we school chaps. He says he's been working since he could remember."

"Well, that isn't very long ago," Hargrave replied, with a smile. "And don't get serious about it. It's all right for Joe to work, and it's all right for you to go to school. The only trouble is that we

fellows that happen to be luckier and have fathers that can take care of us till we're old enough to earn our livings are more or less apt to think we're better than the Joes. We aren't, Bunny, not a bit; we're just luckier, that's all, and the Joes can teach us a lot of things, after all. At any rate, they don't find fault with everything that doesn't suit them."

"And he's got nerve," Bunny said, enthusiastically. "I tell you, I wouldn't like to work on that bridge every day. I had all I wanted of it."

"It's all in being used to it, Bunny," Hargrave explained. "He doesn't think anything about it. Well, I must go along. Good-night and good-luck to-morrow." And Hargrave went out.

There was no complaint to make of the weather the following morning. The sun shone brightly, and although there was a stiff breeze blowing from the west, it was not too cold for the spectators, and still was cold enough for good football. Lessons that morning were rather uncertain, and had the masters been inclined they might have found reasons for a good many scoldings, but on the day of the Academy-Clinton game many of the professors were almost as much interested as the boys themselves, and no one was severely critical.

The little town was very much excited, and all the stores were decorated for the occasion. The hotel was the principal place of meeting, and all morning long the trains brought visitors from near-by cities. Mrs. Struthers and Bob's sister were com-

ing, and both the boys went to the station to meet them.

Although he had not thought much about it, Bunny was surprised to see his father get off the train with the Struthers, with whom he had renewed the acquaintance made at the sea-shore.

"I'm glad you came to the game," said Bunny, hesitatingly, when they were alone together for a few moments.

"I wanted to see what sort of football you play," said Mr. Reeves. "I don't think much of athletics as a general thing. How do you expect to come out this afternoon?"

"I don't know," replied Bunny, doubtfully. His father always seemed to put him at a disadvantage, and he felt very much embarrassed. "We are going to do the best we can," he added.

"Of course you will do that," his father went on; "but that doesn't win, you know. You must always do a little more than your best when you are in a contest."

"Yes, sir," answered Bunny. He didn't seem to be able to talk with his father, and felt that the latter misunderstood him.

"And how about the dinner?" asked Mr. Reeves.

"We are going to have that," answered Bunny, "and I'm awfully obliged to you, sir, for letting me give it. I think it will be fine, although I don't know what will happen if we lose. I'm afraid some of our fellows won't turn up."

"I hope none of them will be as big babies as that," said Mr. Reeves. "And let me tell you one thing, my boy, it usually takes more nerve to lose like a gentleman than to win like one. Now I am going to see Doctor MacHenry. I have a little surprise for you, something to further this plan of friendship between the two schools, but you'll learn of that at the dinner. I suppose I won't see you till after the game."

Bunny sought out Ted Halliday as soon as the Academy team arrived. There was no doubt that the two boys were glad to see each other, but under the circumstances it was a trifle embarrassing for both of them, so Bunny didn't stay long. He asked if there was anything he could do to make the visiting team comfortable, feeling, rightly, that he was, in a measure, the host of the Academy players; but there wasn't very much said, and Bunny felt that it would be better for him to clear out.

That the game had created unusual interest was shown by the number of people who had come to see it. The usually quiet little town was filled to overflowing with strangers.

As Bunny was going to his room an hour or so before it was time to dress for the game, he became aware of two men coming toward him, and although they had a strangely familiar look, he could not place them for a moment or two. They didn't seem altogether at home among the gay football throng, but Bunny saw that they had huge ribbons of crim-

son and blue tied to the buttonholes of the lapels of their overcoats and that they were grinning broadly at sight of him. Then he recognized them, and hurried forward with outstretched hand.

"Why, Captain John and Captain Sam!" he exclaimed. "How did you get here?"

"Oh, we came up in the train," answered Captain Sam, with a hint of pride in the accomplishment.

"Don't you think we never leave Blue Point?" demanded Captain John. "We come down here to see this here football business we hear so much about."

"How did you know about it?" asked Bunny.

"How do you think, hey?" chuckled Captain John. "Don't we take the newspapers? Do you reckon we ain't awake all year 'cept when you summer boarders come down to the shore?"

Bunny laughed, for it was all good-natured, and the two old watermen knew as well as he did that their presence at a football game was by no means usual.

"I'll tell you," Captain Sam explained. "We've heard a lot of this football, and when I seen in the paper the other day that this Clinton school was havin' a football match, I says to Captain John here, 'That's where Bunny Reeves goes,' and he says, 'What! that Bunny feller what went after the pirates?' and I says, 'Yes,' and then we calculated we'd come down and see what it was all about, and here we are."

"I'm mighty glad to see you," said Bunny. "Have you got seats for the game?"

"Oh yes," replied Captain John. "There was a feller on the train had 'em to sell. We're all right, though we ain't what you'd call licensed pilots of this kind of sailin'. The channels look so tortuous, now and again; if it hadn't been for me, Sam here would have been on a lee shore long ago. When do you calculate to start this here fracas, hey?"

"At two-thirty," said Bunny, "and I'd advise you to go early. I see you are wearing the right colors."

"Sure!" replied Captain John. "As I said to Sam here many a time, that fer old-fashioned, up-to-date nerve *and* sand that Bunny feller had it to give away, and I'm wearin' his colors. And I expect yer to win, too, understand that. You wouldn't want us to come all this way to see yer licked, would you?"

"We'll do the best we can," said Bunny, and a few minutes later started again for his room.

But he had not gotten a great way before some one else hailed him, and so it went. People whom he had never seen before stopped him to ask about their chances. School men who had graduated long before Bunny was born introduced themselves and wished him luck, and it seemed to Bunny that there was nothing in the world quite so important as that game.

In the dressing-rooms Billy Bryan took them in charge, and went about from man to man looking

over padding, and bandaging bruised joints. It was a great day for Billy, or at least he made it that, for he was entirely changed. He seemed to think it was a part of his duty to keep the boys' minds off the game till the time came for them to play, so he went about making jokes and actually laughing till boys, who never saw him even smile, forgot what was to come in their wonder at the change in the old trainer. He was wise, was Billy Bryan, and he knew that those few minutes just before a game are usually ones of agony and suspense, so he tried to make them fly, and it was with much surprise that they heard Hargrave announce that it was time to go on the field and give them a final word of instruction and encouragement.

The grandstand shouted when they appeared, and the crimson and blue of Clinton waved frantically. Bunny lined his boys up for a few signals to start their blood, and gave them something to do while the preliminaries were going on.

A minute later another shout announced the arrival of the Academy eleven, and presently Bunny and Ted, with the officials, were standing in the centre of the field ready to decide the choice of goals.

"You call," said Bunny, as the referee prepared to toss a coin.

"Heads!" called Ted, and all three bent over to see the result.

"You win, Bunny," said Ted, nervously.

"We'll defend the west goal."

"We'll kick off then," returned Ted.

Bunny nodded and went back to line his team up, while Ted Halliday motioned his men to take their places in the centre of the field, and the referee placed the ball on a little mound on the fifty-five-yard line.

"Are you ready, Clinton?" he called, and Bunny signalled that he was.

"Ready, Academy?"

"Yes," answered Halliday.

"Play!" shouted the referee, and, as his whistle blew, Ted ran forward to kick the ball, and the game was on.

XXVII

FIRST HALF

IT was plain to every one, from the moment the game started, that Academy had the heavier team, and they were very fast. Every man on it ran down the field as if his life depended on it, and before Wallace, who caught the ball, could get fairly started in an effort to run it back he was downed on his own fifteen-yard line. The Academy rooters shouted joyfully, and at once predicted defeat for Clinton.

Almost immediately, however, their joy was turned to sorrow, for on a forward pass Bunny made forty yards, and would have gone on for a touchdown if it had not been for Ted Halliday.

The two boys grinned at each other for a moment as they lay on the ground.

"I'll get away next time," said Bunny.

"Not unless I'm asleep," answered Ted.

"It was a good tackle," Bunny admitted.

"It had to be," Ted replied.

Wallace made ten yards on the next run, and Blair immediately after carried the ball from quarter-back for fifteen more, making a first down on Academy's thirty-yard line.

Clinton supporters stood up in the grandstand and cheered wildly; it seemed as if nothing would stop their team, and the crimson and blue waved frantically.

But Ted Halliday rallied his team, and for the next two plays Clinton failed to gain, and Academy breathed more freely. Then Bunny gave a signal for another forward pass, and when the play ended he was clasping the ball tightly on Academy's twenty-yard line, while the referee called "First down for Clinton!" amid redoubled shouting from the grandstand.

It began to look as if, in spite of all that had been predicted of Clinton's weak offence, they would score, and the excitement was extreme. Bunny, realizing how important it was not to make any mistake, cautioned his men to be careful. He knew that if they scored it would make a world of difference to the outcome of the game, for it would discourage the Academy team very much indeed, besides putting them on the offensive for the rest of the play, while he could kick out of danger whenever it was necessary.

They were inside the twenty-five-yard line now, and well toward the left side of the field. Bunny yanked at his trousers, and gave a signal for an end run to the right with Wallace carrying the ball.

Academy was desperate. Their right end danced up and down, expecting naturally that the play would come his way, and determined to stop it. As the ball was snapped he darted across the line, only

to meet Bunny, whose business it was to put him out of the play. Bunny tried, but the Academy end dodged, and although Wallace struggled to shake him off, he found it impossible, and fell for a three-yard loss.

"It was my fault," said Bunny, as he went to help him up. "I missed the end, but I won't let it happen again."

It was the second down, with twenty-three yards between the Clinton eleven and a touchdown. Bunny gave a signal for a straight buck through Walters at guard, and Curtis, doing as well as he could, with Wallace and Bunny pushing him, gained the three yards that had been lost and one more, putting the ball on Academy's nineteen-yard line.

"Now he ought to try for a goal from the field," said Hargrave to Tom Cary on the side-lines, but Bunny didn't. He took the ball himself and carried it through the tackle, with the entire team behind him helping.

There was intense anxiety for a moment on both stands. Each side claimed the ball, but the referee called the linesmen to settle the question, and all was silent while these two with the flags measured the distance gained.

"First down for Clinton!" called the referee, and he was answered by a frantic cheer from the crimson and blue.

But the Academy boys in the grandstand hadn't given up by any means.

"Hold 'em, Academy! Hold 'em, Academy!" they shouted, giving their cheer with a will, and their team responded bravely.

For the next two plays the ball hardly changed its position near the ten-yard line. Plunges failed to gain, and the panting Academy team gritted their teeth and held like a stone wall.

"Come on, fellows, all together now!" shouted Bunny, as he gave a signal. It meant a touchdown or the loss of the ball, and every one of those twenty-two boys knew it.

"Hold 'em!" called Ted Halliday. "Watch the right side of the line there, Marks!" he cautioned the end.

"Change signal!" called Bunny, and he stood behind his own line perplexed for a moment.

Ten yards seemed such a little way to gain after they had been carrying the ball so splendidly before, but it was a good way from a touchdown for all that.

Bunny gave another signal; again Ted Halliday cautioned his team, and an instant later the ball was snapped.

The two lines surged together, and then, as sometimes happens, the ball popped up behind the Clinton line, and it seemed to lie there unobserved by any of the players.

It is probable that for a few seconds Curtis, who had carried the ball, was the only man on either team who knew that it had been fumbled. It was knocked out of his hands as he struck the line, but

all the boys were so intent to get to where the man who was supposed to be carrying it was that they lost sight of the ball itself. And how the grandstand did shout! Each group of partisans tried to tell their team where the ball was, shouted to them that it was on the ground waiting for some one to pick it up, and still no one saw it.

Of course, it was only there a few seconds, but it seemed much longer to those watching, till Marks, Academy's right end, spied it, and made a dive in its direction. Almost at the same instant Crawford saw it, too, and the boys came together as they struggled for the ball. Again there was a breathless suspense, and the referee, pulling the two men apart, finally straightened up and gave his decision.

"First down for Academy!" he called; and for the time being, at least, the visitors had saved their goal-line.

With the ball in his possession, Ted Halliday lost no time in kicking out of danger, and punted on the next play.

Bunny, in the back field with Curtis, tried to advance, but Academy had two good ends, and he was downed almost as he caught the ball on Academy's forty-yard line.

Again Clinton took up the task of working the ball down the field, but it did not seem as easy as it had in those first few minutes of play. Perhaps Academy was suffering a little from stage-fright in the beginning; however that may be, they certainly put up

a stubborn defence from then on, and, try as he would, Bunny failed to make a first down, and was forced to kick.

His punt resulted in a touchback, and Academy kicked off from behind their twenty-five-yard line. Wallace, receiving it, ran ten yards before he was downed, and again Clinton had first down on Academy's forty-yard line, but shortly after were obliged to kick once more.

So it went, the ball in Academy's territory most of the time, each team finding it difficult to gain, and Clinton forced to be satisfied to keep the Academy eleven on the defensive through most of the half.

Toward the close, however, Walters, who had been outplaying his opponent, told Bunny that if he would put plays through the line at guard, he would guarantee to make an opening that an "ice-wagon could go through," as he put it.

Bunny took the ball himself for a straight plunge on the next play, and, with all the team behind him, gained ten yards before Ted Halliday, throwing himself under the struggling mass, succeeded in stopping it.

"Do it again!" shouted Walters, much excited, and Bunny did, with much the same result. On the next play he pretended he would do the same thing, which caused the Academy line to close in tightly, and then Bunny, with good judgment, signalled for a forward pass, and, escaping the end, carried the ball down to Academy's ten-yard line once more.

The Clinton supporters nearly went mad at the prospect of a score, but the Academy, remembering the splendid stand their team had made earlier in the game, rallied them with shouts of "Hold 'em, Academy!" and never ceased their encouraging cheer.

"Now come on, fellows! Everybody together! This is where we must score!" called Bunny, as he gave a signal for a plunge through Walters. And every man on the Clinton team responded with all that was in him, and the ball was not stopped until it was within four yards of the coveted goal-line.

"Hold 'em, Academy!"

"Rah! Rah! Rah! C-L-I-N-T-O-N, Clinton!" shouted the crowd waving the crimson and blue.

Hargrave, with his hands in his pockets, stood motionless on the side-lines, with Billy Bryan, Tom Cary, and a dozen subs squatting around him. None of them had anything to say. They watched intently, each anxiously wondering what the next play would bring forth.

Across the field came the signal, and Hargrave nodded. "That's right, Bunny," he muttered.

Behind his own line Ted Halliday was running from man to man patting them on the back and imploring them to hold. For an instant there was silence over the field as the entire crowd waited breathlessly for the ball to be snapped.

Back it came, and there was a momentary pause; then Bunny, having learned that it is not the part

of wisdom to plunge into the centre of a line defending inside its ten-yard mark, blocked Marks, the Academy end, and Wallace, carrying the ball, sped to the right and crossed the line for a touchdown.

On the side-lines the Clinton subs were shaking hands with one another when they weren't throwing blankets up in the air, and all the time were yelling at the top of their lungs. Hargrave, much pleased but more dignified, smiled grimly when he reminded the boys about him that the game wasn't over yet by a good deal.

Billy Bryan, as taciturn as ever, muttered to himself something about a steam-box, while in the grandstand Clinton shouted themselves hoarse and waved their flags madly.

There was a moment's pause in the demonstrations of delight while the goal was being kicked, but as Bunny put the ball cleanly between the posts, the shouting broke forth with renewed vigor, and Clinton congratulated itself and acted generally as if the game had been won.

A little later the half ended. Bunny and his team found themselves in the gymnasium, glad to rest and very happy.

XXVIII

INTERMISSION

IN the dressing-rooms the coaches immediately took charge. The Academy eleven was exhorted not to give up, and assured that they could score in the next half if they took advantage of the weaknesses of their opponents, which were pointed out to them in detail. Ted Halliday shook his head doggedly, and the serious faces of the boys about him showed that they had no intention of quitting, and were determined to win if that were possible.

Hargrave had, perhaps, the hardest task. He was pleased, of course, at the showing Clinton had made, but he was by no means satisfied. Moreover, his team was optimistic: rather proud of themselves, and felt assured that to all intents and purposes the game had been won. They could not help knowing that the ball had remained in Academy's territory practically the entire half, and that seemed to show the relative strength of the two teams. Of course, Hargrave criticised and found fault with nearly every one, prophesying that the next half would be different; but the boys didn't really believe this, and took for granted that he would talk this way

no matter what they might have done. It was a part of the coaches' business.

Hargrave knew what overconfidence often leads to, and going from man to man he growled at them severely, telling them their faults and doing the best he could to counteract their certainty. He warned them that it had taken the entire half to score, and that on more than one occasion the Academy team had held them near their goal; that, with the wind against them, as it would be when the game started again, they would find that it was not so easy to keep their opponents on the defensive. He tried to impress upon them the fact that Academy had a good team, and that, instead of its being easier, it would be much harder the next half.

"And now see here," he ended, addressing the entire squad, "you want to get this notion that the game is won out of your heads. You have to play harder or you'll find yourselves beaten; remember that, before this game is over, you are all going to feel tired. I know, because I've been through it, and, let me tell you, that is the time when close games are won or lost. When your legs begin to ache, and you feel bruised and wish the game was over, that's the time you want to take a brace and forget all about yourselves. I don't want to see a fellow on the team running slowly because he thinks some one else will help the runner. Keep after him just the same, and you'll find that nine times out of ten you'll reach him in time to help when he most needs

it. And another thing. It isn't long runs that count in the end. It is the sure gains of a few yards at a time with every man on the eleven helping; the steady pounding away at it with never a let-up; and that's what you have before you if you want to win this game."

The boys listened, nodded their heads in agreement, and believed in their hearts that it was all right and there wasn't anything to worry about.

Bunny sat in the corner of the dressing-room, more or less absorbed in his own thoughts. He was conscious of a change in his feelings toward the outcome of the game. Heretofore his desire to win was all more or less impersonal—a matter of glory for the school and the team. But now, with the knowledge that his father was looking on, the result took on a much more serious aspect as far as he was concerned. It had become a very personal matter with Bunny. It was as if he were on trial to prove himself worthy of his father's consideration, to counteract the impression made by the canoe-race—to show, in a word, that he did have "nerve." He was confident, as were his team-mates, that they would win; but he was more anxious than they, and could not rid himself of the possibility that something might happen to defeat him.

"We must win!" he said to himself. "We must win, and that's all there is to it!"

Meanwhile the usual scene between the halfs was going on out on the field. Old graduates of both

schools were renewing bygone friendships as they moved slowly along the side-lines to stir their blood after sitting so long in the grandstand. The Clinton boys shouted their predictions of victory, adding pointed remarks which were answered in kind, thus betraying the bitter rivalry between the schools. Doctor MacHenry and Mr. Reeves commented upon it, and the latter was about to refer to the football dinner when an unfamiliar voice speaking behind them arrested his attention.

"Well, fer unadulterated, simon-pure nerve *and* sand, I never see a boy like that Bunny feller!"

Mr. Reeves and the doctor turned to face the two old captains.

"I think I heard you talking of my boy," said the former, with a smile. "Something of nerve, I think."

"Well, I guess we did, if you mean that Bunny feller," Captain John responded. "Why, say, I was just speakin' to Captain Sam about it, and he agrees with me that fer died-in-the-wool, warranted, high-grade nerve *and* sand that Bunny feller can't be beat. Am I right?" he ended, appealing to his companion.

"You certainly are!" Captain Sam affirmed. "And we know what we're a-talkin' about, too."

"I suppose you mean this football game?" Mr. Reeves remarked.

"Oh, it ain't no game we're talkin' about," Captain John replied. "We ain't what you might call experts with this here rough-and-tumble business. No, sir; we're talkin' about what happened this sum-

mer down by Blue Point. If it hadn't been fer him there'd be a lot of pirate fellers livin' easy this winter, all right."

"Pirates!" exclaimed Doctor MacHenry and Mr. Reeves together.

"That's what we said—pirates!" Captain Sam affirmed.

"What is this all about?" asked Mr. Reeves, turning to the doctor.

"I have no idea," said that gentleman.

"I'm the boy's father," Mr. Reeves went on, addressing the two captains. "You see, I'm interested—"

"Is that so?" Captain John interrupted, holding out a large hand. "I want to shake with you. I can see you're mighty proud of your son, and I don't know as I blame you none, fer, as I was sayin', fer rock-ballasted, square-rigged, copper-bottomed nerve *and* sand, he's got most men and all boys beat a mile."

"But what about those pirates?" Mr. Reeves demanded. "I haven't heard of them before."

The two old captains looked at each other, and then at the two men before them.

"Go 'long," said Captain John, incredulously, "you're foolin'. Why, everybody knows about that."

"I pledge you my word I have no idea what you are talking about," Mr. Reeves protested, earnestly.

"You mean he ain't never told you?" Captain Sam insisted.

Mr. Reeves shook his head.

"Not how he stuck to them pirates down the bay when they was tryin' to kill him?" Captain John put in. "How he follered 'em without no sign of help comin', and they doin' all they knew how to drown him? You mean to tell me he ain't never told you about the *Olymp?*"

"This is the first word I have heard of it," replied Mr. Reeves.

Again the two captains looked at each other in astonishment.

"Where have you been, may I ask?" said Captain Sam. "It ain't natural fer a boy not to tell his dad a thing like that. I don't remember to have seen you at Blue Point, now I come to think of it."

"Please tell me the story," Mr. Reeves begged; and forthwith the two captains, very familiar with the tale from many repetitions, went over it once more while the old doctor and Mr. Reeves listened attentively. At the end Mr. Reeves shook hands with them.

"I can't tell you how glad I am that I met you," he said, gravely. "What you tell me about my boy makes me very proud of him, indeed. I wish I had known it sooner."

"There ain't a boy or man 'long Barnegat way as don't know of it," Captain John said, as they parted; "and as I was sayin', fer home-grown, hand-picked, corn-fed nerve *and* sand, that Bunny feller runs fourteen to the dozen. Ain't I right, Sam?"

Doctor MacHenry and Mr. Reeves walked slowly away, the latter busy with many new thoughts. Now and then he would shake his head and murmur, half-aloud, "I was wrong, quite wrong," and the old doctor, catching the words, would nod an affirmative.

"Doctor MacHenry," began Mr. Reeves, at length, "I've been doing him an injustice—a gross injustice, sir. He's a fine boy!"

"I have been telling you that for nearly ten years," replied the doctor, "but you were so certain of your view of the matter that you would persist in thinking I didn't know what I was talking about."

"I was mistaken," confessed Mr. Reeves, heartily —"I was entirely mistaken, but I thought you were judging only by athletics."

"You must give me credit for knowing boys, considering how long I have had to do with them," the doctor went on. "I don't judge by athletics, although, in spite of what you seem to think, it does take courage and perseverance, what you call 'nerve,' to play football or run a mile or row a boat. But that is neither here nor there. Your son has always been a brave boy in all things, and every one knows it except his father. It provoked me on more than one occasion, and I rather regretted not having you in the school any longer. I should have tried to impress the lesson upon you." The doctor smiled, but was no less earnest on that account.

Mr. Reeves replied, heartily: "Scold me by all

means, doctor, I deserve it;. but you had better seize the present opportunity, you shall not have another. I shall make it up to the boy from this day on. He's a fine boy, sir. Think of his sticking to those thieves! I call that fine! And he does play good football, you can't deny that. Yes, sir, I shall make it up to him, as he deserves."

Doctor MacHenry chuckled at Mr. Reeves's growing enthusiasm over Bunny.

"But you haven't said a word about his studies yet," he remarked, casually. "I suppose you will now take an interest in them also?"

Mr. Reeves laughed as he caught the other's meaning. "I shall continue to leave those matters to you, as heretofore. I think I should have heard if he had been far behind."

"Yes," answered the doctor—"yes, I should have let you know; but I may tell you that he does as well as the average, and there is no complaint on that score."

"Isn't he almost too perfect?" asked Mr. Reeves, with a smile.

"Oh, by no means!" answered the doctor, with a chuckle. "He's just an ordinary boy, so don't begin to grow too proud of him. I could tell you tales of your son that would tend to take the edge off his perfection, but I don't fancy those would be of much interest."

"My dear doctor, I don't want my boy to be perfect," answered Mr. Reeves, earnestly. "If he's

brave and honest, that's all I want. Well, I find he is that, and I feel that I have not done my duty toward him as I should. I shall make it up to him, sir. I wish I could see him this minute. And, by-the-way, I'm very glad I planned that little surprise for his dinner. I want to tell you about it—"

But just then the whistle blew to clear the field, and a few minutes later the teams appeared, ready for the second half.

XXIX

SECOND HALF

IT was apparent at once to any of the spectators that the Academy team had no idea of giving up the contest. They came out for the second half on the jump, and the moment the ball was kicked started up the field with a determination that showed they meant to score. There were no spectacular runs, no brilliant rushes, but just a steady push, push, push, making first down after first down with only a margin of a yard or two. Clinton looked on at first with a rather tolerant amusement that changed to a more serious view of the matter as Academy forced the ball inside the twenty-five-yard line. Then their anxiety became apparent.

The cheers from the grandstand became anxious in tone. It was Clinton now that was calling, "Hold 'em! hold 'em!" It was Academy supporters who cheered their team wildly as the ball came nearer and nearer the goal-line.

Bunny shouted to his men to brace up, and threw himself frantically into the scrimmages in a desperate effort to stop the rush. But on it went, slowly, but with a certainty that caused many heartaches in the

Clinton stand. There was no stopping them. Academy, without once losing it, forced the ball over the line for a touchdown within ten minutes of the opening of the second half, and Ted Halliday, with great precision, kicked the goal, and the score was tied. Now was the time that nerve and pluck would count. So evenly were the teams matched that no one could tell what the outcome might be. Hargrave, at least, realized that from then on it was a question which eleven would have the grit to go on fighting, and not give in to tired muscles and panting lungs. The real test would come toward the close of the game, when the shadows began to grow long and a chill came into the air.

Hargrave didn't deceive himself about the Academy team. They were a hard-working, determined lot of boys who were captained by a fine player as well as a good general. He knew that the reaction from almost certain winning to only an even break would brace his team materially, and that the likelihood of Academy scoring again so easily was doubtful. But would Clinton score? The answer to that was most uncertain. Hargrave hoped against hope, and pinned his faith on Bunny.

And Bunny, out in the field, was thinking very much the same thing, and planning his campaign accordingly. He decided that it would be wisdom to let the Academy keep the ball, believing that it was more wearing for a team to play on the offensive than on the defensive, and therefore making up his

mind that for the time being, at any rate, he would kick at every opportunity, hoping that Ted Halliday would tire his men out in attempting to score again. Of course, he didn't mean to keep this up indefinitely; but through half the playing-time at least he thought it would be good policy.

Much to his surprise, however, Ted returned the kick-off on the first down. He, too, had decided that it would be sensible to tire the other team, and so for a while the ball went back and forth, while the ends panted from running up and down the field.

Whether the grandstand appreciated these tactics is very doubtful, for from both contingents there was grumbling at the way things were going—the Academy partisans feeling that their eleven could easily repeat their previous scoring, while Clinton followers were much disappointed, and criticised Bunny severely for not at once making a touchdown.

Bunny worried when he found that Ted Halliday was bent on the same plan that he had decided on. It is disconcerting when your own schemes are met so promptly with similar ones, and he would have liked to consult Hargrave upon what he should do. That, however, was out of the question. Bunny knew that once the game began he could not expect any help from the side-lines, so he wasted no time in vain longings.

There was also a hope and a danger in the present way the game was going. If Halliday or the Academy full-back should fumble a catch it would prob-

ably result in one of the Clinton's ends getting it well down in Academy's territory, a fine place to begin an aggressive campaign against the goal-line; but, on the other hand, there was the same danger that Bunny or Curtis might miss a catch, and Bunny thought of that each time the ball came sailing toward him, and breathed more comfortably when he felt it safe in his own arms or was sure that Curtis had it. But what was he to do? Things could not go on like this much longer.

The change came, as it often does, without any intention on Bunny's part. He had just received a kicked ball on his own thirty-yard line, and when the teams lined up he gave a signal for a punt, as usual.

Bunny took his position (for he always did the punting himself), and both teams, in a measure, having gotten into the habit of expecting this play, were more or less careless.

This showed itself first in the Clinton line. As the ball was snapped, the centre men, overzealous and intent upon getting down the field to prevent a long run back, let their opponents through too quickly, and as Bunny caught the ball he saw two Academy men in front of him, ready to block the kick. Bunny didn't hesitate, but, turning quickly, tore around the end all alone.

So unexpected was this move that the Academy ends and halves were completely fooled. Before anybody realized what was going on, Bunny was past the line of scrimmage and had an open field before him.

"A fake kick!" cried the grandstand. "Foxy Bunny fooled 'em!" And then they yelled frantically as the Clinton captain sped on toward the goal-line, which meant victory for his team.

"He'll make it!" they shouted; but they didn't know Ted Halliday, and when the two friends fell together, both struggling as hard as they knew how, there was a murmur of disappointment.

Bunny was on his feet in an instant.

"Line up! Line up!" he called to his men, for he knew the advisability of following up his run with a quick play, which not only disconcerts the other team, but, in a way, carries on the enthusiasm that a previous good play created.

The Clinton eleven responded promptly, and Bunny signalled for Wallace to take the ball through tackle, which he did for a four-yard gain, bringing the ball on Academy's fifteen-yard line.

But that was the end of Clinton's forward march toward the goal. On the next down they lost three yards, so that Bunny had nine to gain on the third down.

There was only one thing to do—try a goal from the field, and Bunny failed. Gloom settled down on the Clinton supporters, and the Academy cheered lustily.

For the next ten minutes the same kicking tactics were kept up till Curtis fumbled a punt on his thirty-yard line, and Marks, Academy's right end, fell on the ball.

Bunny's heart sank for an instant, and then, remembering that his men were all feeling the same way, he rallied them with spirit.

"All right, boys," he called, cheerfully, "we'll take it away from them! Line up!" And the team responded promptly.

Academy made two trials to advance the ball without success, and Ted Halliday signalled for a drop-kick, and went back to his place to make the try.

The suspense was maddening for Clinton. Ted was most deliberate taking his stand before the goal-posts, and measuring the distance and direction before giving the signal for the pass.

"Now, hold them," he said, finally, and an instant later the ball was in his hands. Still, with unusual calmness, he dropped the ball to the ground and kicked strongly. For a moment there was uncertainty, then a roar of joy from Academy, and the referee held up his hand to indicate that the effort had been successful.

The score stood: Academy, 9; Clinton, 6.

"And I taught Ted to do that this summer!" thought Bunny, with despair in his heart.

As he trotted back after the ball he felt that they were beaten, and he wondered what his father was thinking. "And I taught him to do it," he murmured, again and again.

As he returned to the centre of the field, he saw his team-mates walking slowly and listlessly to their places. It was plain to any one that they were giv-

ing up, and this roused all the fighting spirit the boy possessed.

"Come on," he called, roughly, "this isn't the time to stop! Wallace, get a move on you! Here, Thornton, skip up there to your place! What's the matter with you fellows? Haven't you any nerve? Are you going to quit like a lot of babies? Come on and take the ball away from them! We've got to score!"

They rallied, and from then on the battle waged desperately. There was no time now for dilatory strategy. Each team held tenaciously to the ball till, finding it impossible to advance, they were forced to kick. Occasionally a first down was made, and the grandstand cheered hopefully; but the defence always proved equal to stopping any consistent gain, and the ball changed hands frequently.

Clinton had the ball in the centre of the field when the referee told the captains that there were only five minutes more to play. That was the beginning of the end. It was do or die, and Bunny knew that he must hold the ball or the chances of scoring were gone.

"Now fellows," he called, "we've just got to do it! We're beaten if we don't score a touchdown!"

"Come on, we'll do it!" cried Walters, and the others nodded to show their determination, and settled in their places, awaiting the signal.

"Hold 'em, Academy! Hold 'em Academy!" came the long-drawn cry from the bleachers.

"Rah! Rah! Rah! C-L-I-N-T-O-N, Clinton!" came the answering cheer.

Ted Halliday, knowing the crisis, spoke quietly to his men, and went from one to the other, giving each a pat of encouragement. "Watch the end there, Marks," he cautioned, and the two teams faced each other for the final struggle.

"Thirteen—twenty-two—sixty-seven!" called Bunny, and his voice carried to the side-lines, where Hargrave paced nervously up and down.

"It's risky," he murmured, "but the kid has to risk something at this stage of the game."

As he spoke the ball was put in play, but for a moment nothing but a struggling mass of boys could be noted; then, suddenly, Wallace came out of the middle of the scrimmage with a clear field ahead of him, only to trip, and, before he could recover, Halliday was upon him.

"Second down!" called the referee.

Wallace got to his feet, grumbling.

"How can a fellow do anything when no one holds?" he demanded.

"It would have been all right if you'd followed your signal," Crawford retorted.

"Keep quiet," said Bunny; "we haven't any time to scrap now." But the men were tired, a little nervous, and not themselves, so it is not to be wondered at if they were a trifle peevish.

"You think you're a wonder, don't you?" growled Wallace.

"You missed the signal, and it was your fault," Blair cut in.

"That's right," said Thornton; and in a moment the whole team would have been taking a hand in the argument, but Bunny, seeing how things were going, gave a signal, and the men went to their places.

Whether it was this talk, or whether is was because they were tired and disappointed, it is hard to tell; but whatever it was, the whole team suddenly felt irritated. They had been trying so hard only to be beaten, and they became rather savage. Even Bunny, who was not given to losing his temper, found himself distinctly angry, and he snapped out the signals in a way that showed he was well-nigh desperate.

"I'll take the ball myself till I drop," he muttered to himself, and forthwith began a series of the most reckless rushes that had been seen on the field that day.

Time after time Bunny took the ball himself, plunging into the line, making plays off tackle, running the ends, never stopping for breath, driving himself and his men with all his power, while he shouted for them to "Line up!" And the whole team followed his lead half blindly, panting frantically for breath, hearing only the signals, and knowing nothing but that they must push!—and push!—and push!

Inside the twenty-five-yard line there was a mo-

ment's pause as one of the Academy men asked for time out; then the mad rush went on four or five yards at a time, with Bunny carrying the ball on each play. Again and again he would hurl himself forward till those on the side-lines thought he would drop from sheer exhaustion; but on each down he would struggle up again, shouting his signal for the next play and the invariable "Line up!" though his cry came less and less clear, and his team-mates heard his panting even above their own labored breathing. On went Bunny, and the distance lessened gradually but surely. At the five-yard line the struggle became frantic.

"Stop him!" shouted Ted Halliday. "Can't you fellows stop one man?"

But on Bunny went, and at the next down Clinton was only two yards from the coveted line.

Bunny staggered to his feet.

"Line up! Twenty-four — twenty-two — thirty-seven!" he called; and once more the ball came back to him, and once more Bunny struggled forward. As he struck the line he actually bounded back, so tight was it; but never pausing for an instant, he started forward again, and then, putting every effort that he had left in him, he reeled off the struggling mass of legs and arms, and staggered across the goal-line.

There was no stopping the crowd after that. They came swarming on the field, shouting at the top of their lungs, lifting up their voices in one mad shout of praise for Bunny Reeves. Even the Academy

fellows could not withhold their admiration, disappointed though they were, and the Clinton boys went fairly wild.

Hargrave, with Billy Bryan and Tom Cary behind him, shoved his way through the throng that surrounded the exhausted boy, and the old trainer dropped down beside him as Hargrave grasped his hand.

"Good boy, Bunny!" he shouted; "it was the finest thing I ever saw."

At that moment Mr. Reeves pushed through, and knelt beside his son.

"Oh, my boy! my boy!" he cried, "are you hurt?"

Bunny looked up and smiled happily.

"No, I'm all right," he answered, with a glad light in his eyes.

His father patted his shoulder. "It was fine, fine, my boy, and I'm mighty proud of you! But you look worn out," he ended, anxiously, glancing at the old trainer.

"Don't you worry, sir," Billy answered, reassuringly, "the steam-box 'll take all the soreness out of him in no time and—and it was a grand run!"

XXX

THE SCORE

NO one cared very much whether Bunny kicked the goal or not, which was just as well, for he failed in his attempt, being almost too tired to bother with it. The game ended immediately after the kick-off (the score: Clinton, 11; Academy, 9), and the enthusiasm broke forth again as wildly as ever. The two teams cheered each other, and then the spectators broke into the field, and the boys did their snake-dance. Bunny made his way slowly to the dressing-room amid an admiring crowd, but Billy Bryan was intent upon getting him in the steam-box, and hustled him along as fast as possible.

Bunny was himself again, rather ashamed for having gone to pieces so entirely, but too happy to think much about it. All the boys came to shake his hand, and there was quite a reception outside the gymnasium when he appeared.

And one of the first to congratulate him was Ted Halliday.

"You played a fine game, Bunny," he said, manfully.

Bunny appreciated this compliment more than all

the others he had received, for he couldn't help thinking that Ted must be feeling pretty badly, knowing how broken up he would have been if his team had lost.

"I wish we both could have won, Ted," he replied.

Just then Mr. Reeves came up and patted Bunny on the back.

"I was very proud of you," he said, heartily. "It was a fine game. Are you all right?"

"Oh yes," answered Bunny; "there wasn't much the matter except that I was all in."

"Say, you're a wonder," said a voice near him, and Bunny turned to find Joe looking at him admiringly.

"Hello, Joe," he said, holding out his hand. "What do you think of football?"

"Not for me!" answered Joe, promptly. "I haven't the nerve to play that game, thank you. I don't mind a rough-and-tumble out in a lot, but there's too many in that. Talk about bridge-buildin' takin' nerve—why, it ain't in it with football!"

"I guess it depends upon what you are used to," said Hargrave, who was with him.

"Well," returned Bunny, with a laugh, "I'll take football every time."

"Me for bridges!" Joe insisted.

"Ah, by-the-way, speaking of bridges, Hargrave," Mr. Reeves interrupted, seriously, "this isn't the time to talk of it, I suppose, but I've been hearing rumors of a strange boy out on the work having

saved the life of one of your riveters, or something of the kind. A very foolhardy performance, I believe. I have been meaning to mention it to you for some time, and have never had the opportunity. It seems that a youngster wandered out there and nearly lost his life or saved some one's life, I don't know which. I'd like to have caught him; I'd let him understand that half-built bridges are not the places for boys to play on. Do you happen to know who it was, Hargrave?"

Hargrave laughed, and pointed to Bunny.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Reeves. "Am I to hear more stories of this boy of mine?"

"He's the culprit," said Hargrave.

"And I'm the boy he saved," Joe put in, proudly. "And talk about nerve! I've known grown men as wouldn't 'a' come near doin' it. And that ain't all, either," he added, with a wink at Bunny.

Mr. Reeves listened while Hargrave, with Joe's assistance, told of the rescue on the bridge. At the end Mr. Reeves held out his hand to his son.

"My boy," he began, a trifle huskily—"my boy, I—I really am proud of you. I'm just beginning to learn something about you, and I see that I have been mistaken for a long time. Of course, you shouldn't have been on the bridge, but as you were there you did what every man with courage would have done. But," he added, seriously, "you might have fallen."

Mr. Reeves put his hand on Bunny's shoulder,

and the two, with Hargrave, walked slowly to Bunny's room, the boy too happy to think of anything but the joy of being friends with his father.

"By-the-way," said Mr. Reeves, "do you know I met two friends of yours to-day?"

"Who were they?" asked Bunny.

"All I know of their names is Captain John and Captain Sam," answered Mr. Reeves.

Bunny laughed heartily. "Oh yes, I know them, and, father, they're awfully nice, only it is funny to see them at a football game with ribbons on them."

"They had a tale to tell me," Mr. Reeves went on, "and it seems that a father is the last one to hear of the fine things his son does and the first to know of his failures. I saw this boy lose a canoe-race, once and—well, perhaps I was mistaken about that. But what I can't understand, Hargrave, is why they call him 'Bunny'! He has courage enough, surely, and a rabbit is proverbially a cowardly animal, and—"

"Oh," laughed Hargrave, interrupting, "it wasn t on that account he got his nickname. Some one said, years ago, that he 'ran like a rabbit,' and he's been Bunny ever since."

"Well, I have learned many things to-day, and I'm mighty glad I came," said Mr. Reeves, patting Bunny on the shoulder.

The dinner that night was an entire success. At first there was some embarrassment on the part of both teams, but that soon wore off, and the Clinton

boys, determined to play the parts of hosts, talked modestly of their victory, and did their best to make the Academy boys feel at home. They were alone—that is, there were no grown-ups, not even Hargrave, who took the Academy coach off to dinner with him, so that the boys did exactly as they pleased with no feeling of restraint. It was a good dinner, and by the time the dessert was on the table everybody was talking as hard as they could, and was as friendly as possible.

At the end Bunny rose to make a little speech. This part of the programme had worried him, but it had to be done.

"Fellows," he began, "I hope you enjoyed your dinner."

"We did! You bet we did!" they shouted back.

"I'm glad," Bunny went on. "You see, Ted Halliday is one of my best friends, even though we are against each other on the football field, and I didn't see any reason why there shouldn't be good feeling between the schools, if we do try to beat each other in athletics. After all, the two schools are really even on the football games we've played together, for I've been looking up the old records, and I find that each team has won just nine games, so Clinton hasn't anything to boast of, really. I don't know how you fellows from the Academy feel about it, but I hope that hereafter we'll be good friends, and it was on that account that I wanted to have this dinner, just so that we could become acquainted with

each other. That's all I have to say, but before I sit down I want the Clinton fellows to join in a yell for the Academy. Now, all together!"

And Clinton gave their cheer with three long Academy's at the end of it, and then there were calls for Ted Halliday to respond.

Ted rose slowly to his feet, and began:

"We fellows have been thinking over this dinner a good deal since Bunny Reeves invited us here, and I know that I speak for all the team when I tell you that we have enjoyed it more than I can say, and that next year, when Clinton comes to play on our field, there will be another dinner after the game, which we shall try to make as good as this one. We couldn't give you a better one if we tried." At this the Academy boys cheered lustily.

"I haven't anything to say about the game this afternoon," Ted went on, "except this: that we haven't any excuses to make, and that we were beaten fairly and squarely, and that there wasn't any dirty ball on either side. We would like to have won, of course, but you fellows have been so decent about it that my only fear is that when we beat you next year we won't be able to make you feel like winners. Seriously, I think this dinner is a fine thing, and I agree with Bunny that it's just foolish to have all this bitter feeling between the schools, and I can tell you that the Academy fellows will report how finely we have been treated over here, and I can assure you that we shall do our best to make you

feel as much at home when you visit us. Now, fellows, a long cheer for Clinton!" And the Academy team did their best to raise the roof and show their appreciation.

A little later there was a knock on the door, and when it was opened, Doctor MacHenry, carrying something large enclosed in a velvet bag, came into the room, followed by Mr. Reeves and the two coaches.

The old doctor's eyes twinkled as he stopped at the head of the table and looked down at the boys before him.

"I won't keep you long," he began, "though I see you've finished your dinner; but I want to say a word about it, because I think it is a fine thing for all of us, and to me the best part of it is that it all came about from one of yourselves. It wasn't my idea, you understand, nor was there any suggestion from any of our faculty. Well, that is the way it should come, and now I'm sure that the ill-feeling that has existed in the past will disappear."

The old doctor stopped for a moment, and took out of the bag a large silver loving-cup and placed it on the table. "That," he explained, "is the 'Reeves Friendship Cup,' to be played for every year by the two schools, and to be presented to the winning team at the annual dinner that we hope will always follow the game. Mr. Reeves is here, and I will let him speak for himself."

There were more cheers, of course, and then Mr. Reeves began:

"I don't think there is need of my saying very much except to explain that the 'Reeves' on the cup stands for the boy you call 'Bunny,' and not his father. He is the one who gives it, as he is giving the dinner, and although perhaps he doesn't know it himself, his own money paid for both. What I should like this cup to do is to remind the schoolboys of the future of this evening, and when you look at it you will find that the scores of all the games you have ever played together have been engraved upon it, and that each team has won nine, including the one to-day. Therefore, it seems to me that for this year the Academy might take it home with them to show their school-fellows that Clinton is in earnest about being friends, and that hereafter the team winning shall have the custody of the cup for the year following. I want to congratulate both teams on their play this afternoon, and especially the Academy boys, for, as I told my boy before the game, 'it takes more nerve to lose like a gentleman than to win like one,' and that the Academy team has done. I hope the cup will always stand for something more than winning. Now I guess you think I've talked long enough, so I'll stop."

Mr. Reeves was cheered by both teams, and there were speeches by Hargrave and the Academy coach, so that it was quite late when at length the dinner broke up.

"Say, Bunny," said Walters, as they were bidding

each other good-night, "you won the game for us, all right."

"You certainly did," echoed Thornton, as usual.

"Not a bit more than you or the rest of the fellows," Bunny protested. "Everybody did his best. And see here," he added, lowering his voice, "aren't you glad we didn't use those signals, after all?"

Walters shook his head. "No, I'm not," he declared, emphatically; "we might have beaten them a lot worse than we did, and we wouldn't have had heart-failure all that second half. So, sir, I'm not glad. Are you, Thorn?"

"Yes," answered Thornton, with great deliberation—"yes, I *am* glad!"

"What?" exclaimed Bunny and Walters in chorus.

"That's what I said," Thornton went on, doggedly. "I don't care what you say, Walt, I think Bunny did the right thing to send those signals back."

Walters, taken completely by surprise at this sudden independence of his room-mate's, looked vaguely from one to the other of the boys.

"Well, maybe I'm wrong," he admitted, meekly. "Yes, I guess maybe I am. Anyway, I'll think it over."

Still later that night Bunny sat in his father's room talking over the day's events.

"By-the-way, my boy," said Mr. Reeves, "do you remember that canoe-race you lost at Blue Point this summer?"

"Yes," answered Bunny, with a smile.

"Well, it seems to me," his father went on—"it seems to me that I was mistaken in thinking you hadn't the nerve to finish. Was there some other explanation for your losing?"

Bunny was distinctly embarrassed.

"Yes, there was another reason," he answered, hesitatingly.

"That's enough," said Mr. Reeves, "you needn't say anything more about it. I see I was mistaken. Well, my boy, I didn't know you. I had many things to do, and have yet for that matter, but I'm going to let some of them take care of themselves this coming summer, for we're going to Europe together. That, I think, is the best way for us to get to know each other, and it's time we were better friends."

Bunny's face lighted up with pleasure.

"That would be fine!" he said. "Only—"

"Only what?" demanded his father.

"Oh, nothing, except that I was thinking of what Bob and Ted and I had planned for next summer."

"That's it, is it?" replied Mr. Reeves. "We won't have any trouble about that. Why not take Ted and Bob with us?"

"Do you really mean it?" exclaimed Bunny.

"My boy," began Mr. Reeves, "you, too, have something to learn about me. I never say anything I don't mean."

"Father," said Bunny, presently, "where did I

get the money from that you bought the cup with? I didn't know that I had any."

For a moment Mr. Reeves looked out of the window into the night.

"Your mother left it for you, my boy," he said, softly. "I wish she could have known you. She would have been very proud of you, and—and it wouldn't have taken us all this time to get acquainted. Now we'd better be off to bed. To-morrow begins a new life for both of us."

THE END